

Hybrid Studio Practice:

Creating Visualizations of American Sign Language in Participation with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities

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Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
1. ABSTRACT	4
2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	5
3. LIST OF FIGURES	6
4. INTRODUCTION	10
5. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: RECONCILING MY DISABILITY	11
6. HYBRID STUDIO PRACTICE	14
7. BANK OF CONSIDERATIONS	19
7A. PARTICIPATION	19
7B. MATERIALITY	29
7C. LANGUAGE.	30
8. CASE STUDY ONE: “WE BELONG” A PUBLIC ART PROJECT FOR A SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF	33
8A. WE BELONG: LANGUAGE	37
8B. WE BELONG: MATERIALITY	45
8C. WE BELONG: PARTICIPATION	54
9. CASE STUDY TWO: EXPRESSIONS IN ASL, GALLERY ART EXPRESSING LIVED EXPERIENCE IN PARTICIPATION WITH A DEAF INDIVIDUAL.	65
9A. EXPRESSIONS IN ASL: PARTICIPATION	68
9B. EXPRESSIONS IN ASL: LANGUAGE	70
9C. EXPRESSIONS IN ASL: MATERIALITY	72
10. ONE THING NEXT TO ANOTHER	79

11.	CONCLUSION	82
12.	WORKS CITED	85
13.	WORKS CONSULTED	89
14.	GLOSSARY	90
15.	APPENDIX	92
A)	VETERANS' IMPACT PROJECT	92
B)	IMPRESSIONS OF COURAGE	98
C)	LACES OF LYNN	101
D)	MYCORRHIZAL	108
16.	REFLECTION	115

1. Abstract

This paper explores the concept of Hybrid Studio Practice through Kevin Orlosky's experiences in public art, collaborative endeavors, and academic studies. Rejecting traditional disciplinary boundaries, Orlosky embraces a fluid approach that draws from various fields, techniques, and traditions. He finds traditional terms like "interdisciplinary" or "multidisciplinary" insufficient and instead draws inspiration from hybridity, emphasizing the creation of spaces between disciplines. Orlosky's practice sits at the intersection of fine art and design, with each informing the other without hierarchy. His hybrid approach encompasses disciplines such as public art, sculpture, painting, photography, and social practice, allowing for diverse viewer experiences across different spaces and contexts. The paper outlines a bank of considerations underpinning their hybrid artistic practice, including participation, materiality, and language, examining how these elements contribute to defining hybrid studio practice. The case studies of "We Belong" and "Expressions in ASL" exemplify this practice, demonstrating the interconnectedness of various elements in art creation beyond conventional categorizations. These case studies illustrate how hybrid studio practice integrates knowledge from various disciplines and traditions, informing a more expansive approach to art creation. Ultimately, Orlosky highlights the fluidity and interconnectedness of hybrid studio practice, where projects develop in tandem, influencing and enriching each other throughout the process.

2. Land Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that this research has been conducted on the stolen and unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish people, the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilw̓ ətaʔt̓ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Unceded means that this land was never surrendered, relinquished or handed over in any way. I recognize that I am an uninvited guest, I am grateful for being on these lands and for being able to conduct my practice and research here.

3. List of Figures

Figure 1. Daric Gill, "Define Your Discipline". infographic. 2012. Accessed 1/24/24 https://daricgill.com/2013/08/26/define-your-discipline/	14
Figure 2. The Art of Change, "West Meets East" Photo-mural. 16 x 12'. 1992. accessed 2/26/2024	20
Figure 3. Herrel Fletcher and Jon Rubin, "Some People From Around Here" Six Painted Plywood Portraits. 8x8. 1997 accessed 2/26/24	21
Figure 4. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky. "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9 x 12 x 12' 2022	26
Figure 5. . Kevin Orlosky, Andra Orlosky, and James Robertson. "Veterans' Impact Project."	27
Figure 6. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski. "Impressions of Courage." Ink on Muslin. 7.5 x 733'. 2016	28
Figure 7. Julia Vogl and Peter Hudson, "Colouring Adult Eczema". 2020. accessed 11/12/23	34
Figure 8. Kevin Orlosky. "What We Seek." Steel, Acrylic, and Spray paint. 33" x 21" x 12". 2022	36
Figure 9. Chuck Baird, "Art No. 2 (ASL sign for Art)." Painting. 1999	39
Figure 10. Susan Dupor, "Into Fruition." Oil on Canvas. 40" x50". 2004	40
Figure 11. Johnston Grindstaff, "The Police." Photograph	41
Figure 12. Kevin Orlosky, "Imagine Everything Possible." Digital Photograph. 2023	43
Figure 13. Kevin Orlosky, "We Belong Here." Digital Photograph. 2023	44
Figure 14. Kevin Orlosky, "Believe In Your Dreams." Digital Photograph. 2023	45
Figure 15. Eight different gloves tested and used in my research.	47
Figure 16. Kevin Orlosky, State of Practice installation view	48
Figure 17. Kevin Orlosky, "Imagine Everything is Possible." Digital Print on transparency. 2023	49
Figure 18. Kevin Orlosky, "Believe in Your Dreams." Digital Print on transparency. 2023	50
Figure 19. Kevin Orlosky, "We Belong Here." Digital Print on transparency. 2023	50
Figure 20. Kevin Orlosky, "Believe in Your Dreams." (Detail). Digital Print on transparency. 2023	51
Figure 21. Kevin Orlosky. "Be confident, grow, you are smart." digital rendering in glass. 2024	52
Figure 22. Kevin Orlosky. "Be confident, grow, you are smart" digital rendering in glass. 2024	53
Figure 23. Kevin Orlosky. "Be confident, grow, you are smart" digital rendering in glass. 2024	53

Figure 24. Kevin Orlosky. "Socialization Accessible, Not Feel Alone" Digital Photograph. 2024	56
Figure 25. Kevin Orlosky. "Be Happy and Friendly" Digital Photograph. 2024	57
Figure 26. Kevin Orlosky. "Support and Help" Digital Photograph. 2024	58
Figure 27. Kevin Orlosky. "Be Confident, Grow, You are Smart" Digital Photograph. 2024	59
Figure 28. Kevin Orlosky. "We Terriers Stick Together" Digital Photograph. 2024	60
Figure 29. Kevin Orlosky. "You Can Do Anything" Digital Photograph. 2024	61
Figure 30. Kevin Orlosky. "We Are Family" Digital Photograph. 2024	62
Figure 31. Kevin Orlosky. "Just Be Courage" Digital Photograph. 2024	63
Figure 32. Kevin Orlosky. "You Are Important" Digital Photograph. 2024	64
Figure 33. Kevin Orlosky "Spiritual Balance" Digital Photograph. 2024	65
Figure 34. Kevin Orlosky "Freedom" Digital Photograph. 2024	65
Figure 35. Christine Sun Kim, "All Day" and "All Night," 2013, Charcoal and pen on paper, Each 38.5 x 20 inches, From her Exhibition "Soundings" at MoMA, New York.	66
Figure 36. Christine Sun Kim. "Time Owes Me Rest Again." Mural, dimensions variable. Queens Museum. 2022	67
Figure 37. Kevin Orlosky, Thesis Exhibition installation. 2024	72
Figure 38. Kevin Orlosky, "Freedom." (front view). Epoxy Resin 2024	73
Figure 39. Kevin Orlosky, "Freedom." (Back View). Epoxy Resin. 2024	74
Figure 40. Kevin Orlosky, "Freedom." (quarter view). Epoxy Resin. 2024	74
Figure 41. Kevin Orlosky, "Spiritual Balance." Steel and Enamel. 2024	75
Figure 42. Kevin Orlosky, "Self-Forgiveness and Holding Hurt Heart." Digital Photograph 2024	76
Figure 43. Kevin Orlosky, "Self-Forgiveness and Holding Hurt Heart." Digital Rendering. 2024	77
Figure 44. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, and James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." 3 panels 3' x 16.25' x 6". Forton MG. 2014	92
Figure 45. Firing the Ballista.	93
Figure 46. Infantry Unit pressing objects into clay.	94
Figure 47. Panel 2 Detail	95
Figure 48. Infantry Unit pressing objects into clay.	95

Figure 49. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." Panel 1. Forton MG. 2014	95
Figure 50. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." Panel 2. Forton MG. 2014	96
Figure 51. Figure 46. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." Panel 3. Forton MG. 20	97
Figure 52. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." Ink on Muslin. 7.6' x 733'. 2016	98
Figure 53. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." (Detail). Ink on Muslin. 2016	99
Figure 54. Printing with steamroller	99
Figure 55. Inking the plates	99
Figure 58. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." (Detail). Ink on Muslin. 2016	100
Figure 56. . Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." (Detail). Ink on Muslin. 2016	100
Figure 57. Showing the print.	100
Figure 59. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022	101
Figure 60. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022	103
Figure 61. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." (Detail). Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022	104
Figure 62. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022	105
Figure 63. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." (Painted Steel). Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022	106

Figure 64. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022	107
Figure 65. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimesions Variable. 2023	108
Figure 66. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." (Detail). Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimesions Variable. 2023	110
Figure 67. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." (Detail). Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimesions Variable. 2023	111
Figure 68. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimesions Variable. 2023	112
Figure 69. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimesions Variable. 2023	113
Figure 70. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimensions Variable. 2023	114

4. Introduction

Their hands were illuminated as they moved through the darkened space. They were speaking but made no sound. The message was communicated through the light. The hands told me “You are important.” However, that message was not meant for me, it was meant for future students at a school for the Deaf. A special place where Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) kids grow in a tight-knit community, are educated, and learn American Sign Language and English, and are lifted through empowering lessons like the aforementioned message. That message was communicated in American Sign Language (ASL) but captured in light through photography translating a moving language into an image. The image is a kind of hybrid between written language and visual art where it isn’t either but simultaneously both. Through this exploration of visualizing ASL I have found a hybridity in my practice that weaves together the full spectrum of ways I work as an artist.

This thesis support document lays out the research that led to evolving my practice into one that defies discipline and borrows from many fields and traditions. I have gathered facets and theories around hybridity, disciplinary art, site specificity, and participation to create the term hybrid studio practice. I establish a bank of considerations that are adapted into my hybrid studio practice and present them through two case studies where I collaborate with D/HH participants to create visualizations of messages and expressions in ASL. Within each case study I examine how I approached my three considerations; participation, materiality, and language, and illustrate how the two case studies work together to define a hybrid studio practice.

5. Autoethnography: Reconciling My Disability

When I was seventeen, I suffered a severe brain injury while attempting to land backwards when jumping off a set of stairs roughly fifteen feet above the ground wearing inline skates. I didn't stick the landing and slammed my helmetless head onto the concrete. I was lucky to be alive. This moment completely altered how I engage with the world around me. As a result of this accident, I shattered my eighth cranial nerve causing me to have profound unilateral deafness, or in simpler terms, I became deaf in my left ear.¹ It took me a long time to recover, and a longer time to figure out how to navigate the world with only the use of one ear. I vividly remember my first day back to school. I arrived during lunch and entered the cafeteria full of kids conversing, laughing, and yelling. The wall of noise that hit me was overwhelming and disorienting. I struggled to decipher individual voices, even those of my friends sitting at the table across from me.

I did my best to embrace my new disability. I was very open and candid to dispel awkward interactions with new people. Over the years it became a chore to explain, especially when I felt I had adapted to it so well, it had little effect on my day to day. When I became an adult and entered the professional realm, that additional work of explanation was enough of a deterrent that it was as if I began to hide it.

¹ According to Physio-pedia.com the vestibulocochlear nerve, also known as [cranial nerve](#) eight (CN VIII), consists of the [vestibular](#) and cochlear nerves. It is located in the internal auditory meatus (internal auditory canal). The vestibular nerve is primarily responsible for maintaining body [balance](#) and eye movements, while the cochlear nerve is responsible for hearing. ([The Vestibulocochlear Nerve \(CN VIII\) - Physiopedia \(physio-pedia.com\)](#))

In 2007 in Richmond, Virginia, I co-founded an arts non-profit, Art on Wheels, with my partner Andrea. Art on Wheels was (and is) dedicated to bringing therapeutic arts programming to marginalized populations.² I knew first-hand the transformative powers of art as it was a crucial step for me to deal with the trauma of losing hearing in my left ear. I wanted to provide others with the opportunity for a similar experience, and as a part of this we started doing community arts projects in public spaces. The joy we found in connecting with others and involving people in making art allowed our projects to grow bigger, more inventive, and more innovative. It was during a personal moment of reflection upon completion of a monumental project that it clicked: this was the art practice I was meant to do.

I came to Emily Carr University to deepen and expand my practice. What I did not realize was that by leaving the community I built in Virginia and surrounding myself with new people I would be spending a considerable amount of time with pushed me to be candid once again about my deafness. During one of our earlier classes I announced that I was Hard of Hearing and was surprised by the emotion that overcame me. I had spent so much of my adulthood dismissing my disability because I'd learned to navigate the world with minimal affect. I could still hear; I wasn't deaf enough to consider myself disabled. Or at least that is what I thought. It was during my research for this thesis project that I was able to understand what I was doing to myself. The words of Alice Wong in her introduction in the book *Disability Visibility* resonated with my experience, "there is no such thing as whether you are disabled 'enough' to be a part of a community or claim an identity. This is a function of systemic internalized oppressions."

² Art on Wheels, <https://artonwheels-va.org>

(Wong, xvii) I realized if I was self-oppressing my disability, even when I thought I had fully come to terms with it, there must be countless others out there with the same experience. As a part of my artistic research, I made it my goal to explore and communicate the lived experiences of others with disabilities through art.

6. Hybrid Studio Practice

Through my research I set out to define my artistic practice. In recent years I have been contextualizing my practice in the realm of Public Art. This is due to forming a collaborative public art studio with my partner Andrea Orlosky. When I considered my practice and artmaking within the production, time, and budgetary limitations of the MFA program at Emily Carr University, I found myself blending my knowledge as a public artist, maker, project manager, designer, inventor, creative problem solver, and tinkerer, with a gallery-oriented practice that fits into the institution's framework. My artworks are project-based spanning different disciplines, traditions, approaches, techniques, and materials. Terms such as interdisciplinary³, multidisciplinary⁴, and transdisciplinary⁵ have inadequately described my practice. Through my research I have found the definitions written by artist Daric Gill to be clear and his infographic using the metaphor

³ *Interdisciplinary Artist* - Varied disciplines working together mutually. This is a wider and more thorough blending of concept, philosophy, process, tools, and more. A person or a team of people who are interdisciplinary use a skilled philosophy or knowledge from several fields to solve problems that are outside the scope of the traditional boundaries. Other academic and practical fields are often used as sources of influence. (Gill, <https://daricgill.com/2013/08/26/define-your-discipline/>)

⁴ *Multidisciplinary Artist* - This area of expertise has begun to blend several disciplines together to form an altogether new field. A multidisciplinary artist has a wide knowledge-base that is deeply invested in a range of materials, how those materials are used together, and the processes inherent to those materials. This category encompasses much of the work that isn't easily contained by the normal categories of art-making. (Gill, <https://daricgill.com/2013/08/26/define-your-discipline/>)

⁵ *Trans-Disciplinary* - The boundaries that make trans-disciplinary research are so blurred that one can't be described as belonging to only one field. They are as much an artist as a scientist or a builder or any other specific field. This mode is one that glorifies a holistic approach over a singular approach. A person or group of people can be specialists in their field but mold together as a collective to poll processes and philosophies to solve complex issues (Gill, <https://daricgill.com/2013/08/26/define-your-discipline/>)

of the sandwich makes the difference between the terms easy to digest (Figure 1).

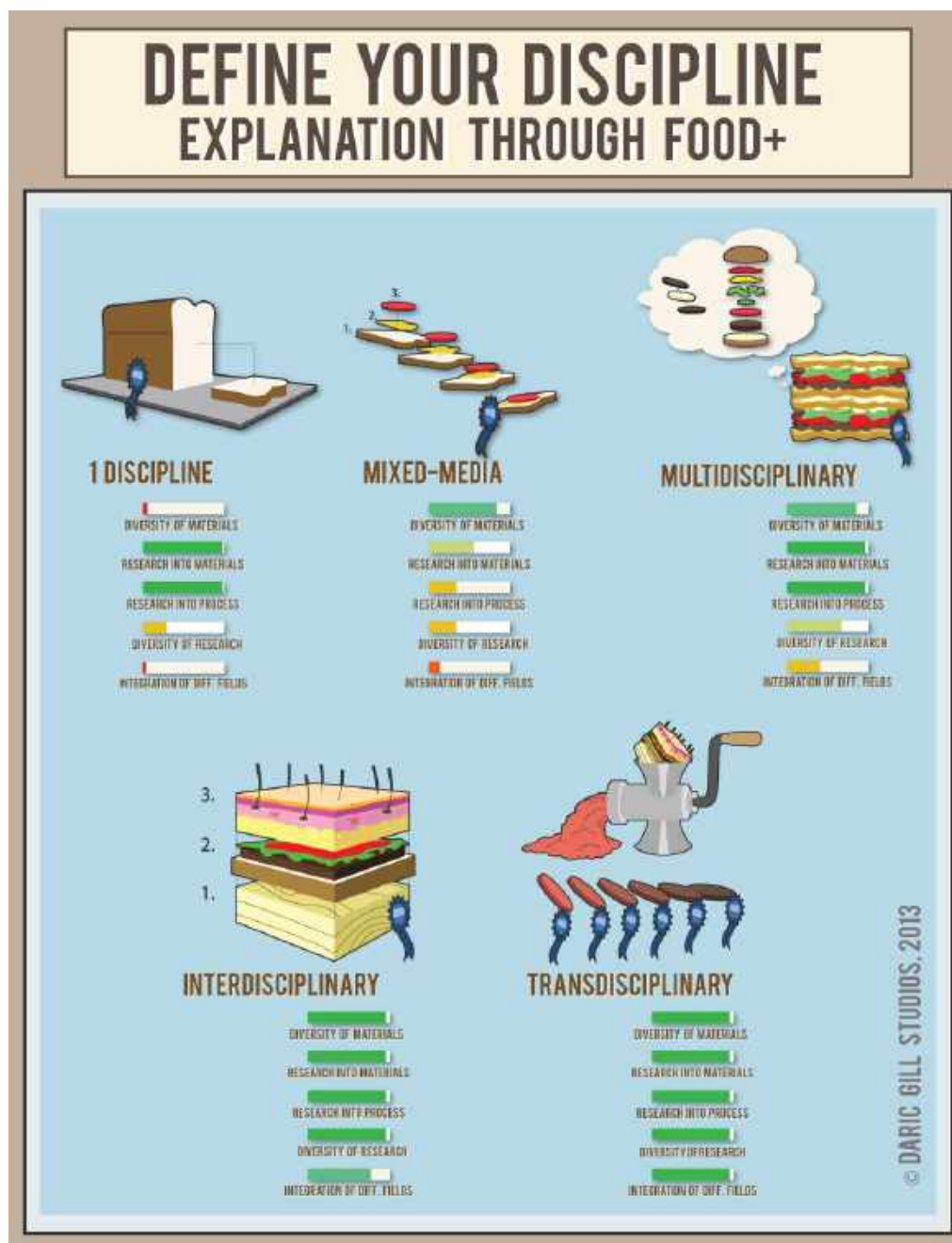


Figure 1. Daric Gill, "Define Your Discipline". infographic. 2012. Accessed 1/24/24

<https://daricgill.com/2013/08/26/define-your-discipline/>

While aspects of each term resonate with my practice, no definition sufficiently illustrates its breadth. I realized it is the common word, *discipline*, that doesn't do my

practice justice.⁶ While multi/inter/transdisciplinary suggest artists jump between or bridge disciplines, they all insinuate a prescription to disciplines. In Simon Penny's *Rigorous Interdisciplinary Pedagogy: Five Years at ACE*, he describes a disciplinary world view that is constrained by its rules and structures. He uses the metaphor of disciplines as silos that an interdisciplinary practice creates a webbing in the spaces between them (Penny). Instead of contending with the verticalness of discipline, I suggest turning it on its side so that navigating the spaces are more fluid and become a hybrid. My practice is situated within a framework navigating between design commercial, and public art fields with a fine arts practice. It borrows from many different disciplines but at the same time is not invested in the institution of any discipline. That is why I label my practice as **hybrid studio practice**.

Hybrid studio practice is a studio art practice that can draw from, pivot between, and crossover multiple fields, disciplines, traditions, and approaches. It sits in the spaces between them. A space that has characteristics of two different worlds but is not defined by either. Ars Electronica curators Gernot Stocker and Christine Schopf in *HYBRID: Living in Paradox* clarify the term hybrid as follows:

*no other term provides such a consummately appropriate and comprehensive
description of the highly paradoxical current state of our world, one that is
characterized by inter-relationships that, among other things, are extraordinarily*

⁶ The Canada Council for the Arts lists arts disciplines as circus arts, dance, deaf and disability arts, digital arts, dance, inter-arts, literature, media arts, multidisciplinary activities, music and sound, theater, and visual arts. [Fields of practice | Canada Council for the Arts](#). The National Endowment for The Arts in the USA lists art disciplines as artist communities, arts education, dance, design, folk and traditional arts, literary arts, local arts agencies, media arts, museums, music, musical theater, opera, presenting and multidisciplinary works, theater, and visual arts. [GRANTS FOR ARTS PROJECTS: Artistic Disciplines | National Endowment for the Arts](#).

contradictory while at the same time displaying superb operative effectiveness.

(Stocker and Schopf, 10)

A hybrid studio practice relates to contemporary artmaking as it engages with the different worlds around it. Hybrid studio practice considers this while underscoring the practical considerations and flexibility required of an artist to navigate the current paradoxical global landscape. I am drawn to this notion of a hybrid practice that represents the spaces between discipline, a space where they are not simply blended, but relational as one thing next to another. This thesis project is my first application of the research that led to defining hybrid studio practice.

Different aspects within a hybrid studio practice inform the other in a non-linear fashion. This is illustrated in my thesis projects collaborating with D/HH communities and will be further explained after the case studies proceeding. My practice sits in the space between the fields of Fine Art and Design. Each informs the other without a significant hierarchy. In some cases, I create fine art informed by design, and others I create designs informed by a fine art process. But that is not the only way my practice is a hybrid. My studio practice is a hybrid of disciplines and traditions including public art, sculpture, painting, photography, mural arts, video, media arts, social practice, participatory art, and interactive art. This notion of hybridity allows my artworks to cross over spaces for viewer experience, including public and private spaces, gallery exhibitions, festivals, events, and many others. Remaining fluid in a hybrid studio practice allows for new possibilities to emerge, for knowledge gained in one field,

approach, or process to influence another, for collaborations to strengthen the artworks through shared ontologies, and for artworks to connect and relate to a larger audience.⁷

⁷ Studio Olafur Eliasson is another practice I would consider to be a hybrid studio practice as they have a prolific practice that is hard to define. It sits in the spaces between fine art, performance, science, architecture, participation, and many others. [Studio Olafur Eliasson](#)

7. Bank of Considerations

Within my hybrid practice I have designated a bank of considerations that remain constant through every project. They are participation, materiality, symbolism, color, language, connectivity, placemaking, history, and lived experience. I consider each of these attributes individually, as well as how they relate to each other. This thesis project focuses research on expanding three considerations: participation, materiality, and language, and examines how they relate to and help define hybrid studio practice.

7a. Participation

Participation is among the most important considerations in my practice as the primary subject of all my artworks is people. More specifically the people of a certain community, site, group, or geography. My research investigates how I adapt theories of participation discussed by Clair Bishop and Leisabeth Huybrechts. I use the term participation as an umbrella term in the same way Clair Bishop defines Participatory Art in the book *Artificial Hells*. She states:

This expanded field of post-studio practices currently goes under a variety of names: socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, interventionist art, participatory art, collaborative art, contextual art and (most recently) social practice. I will be referring to this tendency as ‘participatory art’, since this connotes the involvement of many people (as opposed to the one-to-one relationship of ‘interactivity’) and avoids the ambiguities of ‘social engagement.’

To view image visit:

[West meets East 1992 | cSPACE](#)

Figure 2. The Art of Change, "West Meets East" Photo-mural. 16 x 12'. 1992. accessed 2/26/2024



Figure 3. Herrel Fletcher and Jon Rubin, "Some People From Around Here" Six Painted Plywood Portraits. 8x8. 1997 accessed 2/26/24

This makes the case that participation can happen at any point of the process for it to be participatory art. Both *Artificial Hells* and *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* by Rudolf Freiling et al. give a breadth of examples of participatory art projects, including The Art of Change's "West Meets East,"⁸ Harrell Fletcher and Jon Rubin's "Some People From Around Here,"⁹ And Mieko Shiomi's *Spatial Poem No. 1*,¹⁰ all of which put participation in the design and development of the aesthetic objects exhibited.

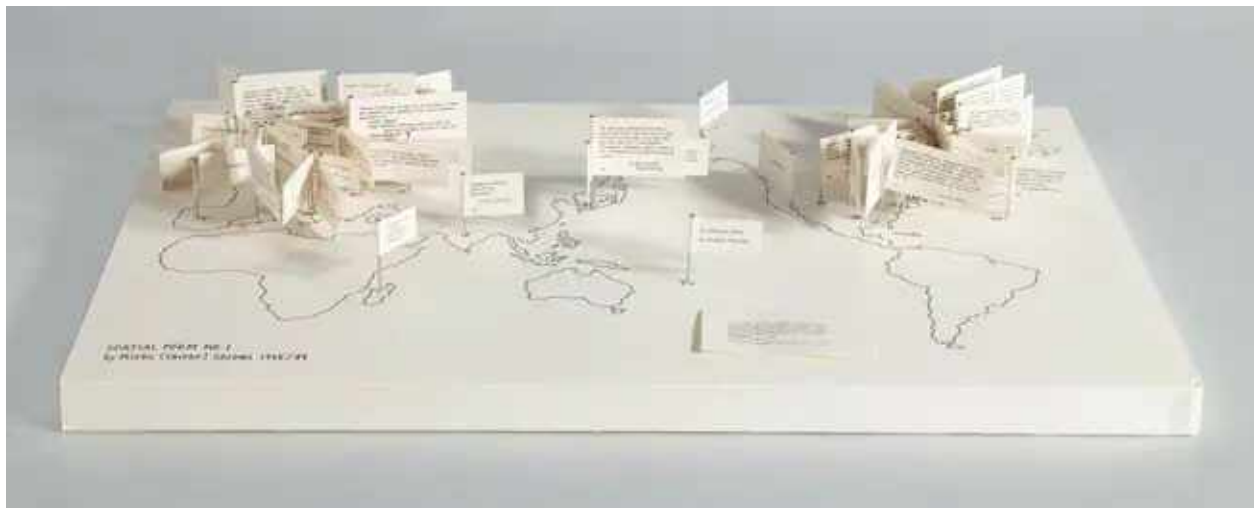


Figure 4. Mieko Shiomi, "Spatial Poem No. 1. World map on white board, map drawn with black marker or pen, small printed flags, and straight pins. 13 × 18 1/16 × 7/8 in. 1965. [Mieko Shiomi. Spatial Poem No. 1. 1965 | MoMA](#) accessed 2/26/24

⁸ "A project with teenage Bengali girls from Bow, East London exploring the theme of their experience of living in two cultures, resulting in a 16 x 12ft (4.8 x 3.6m) photo-mural and touring exhibition." [West meets East 1992 | cSPACE](#)

⁹ "This temporary project consisted of six 8'x8' portraits painted on plywood and placed along the I-80 Freeway outside of the City of Fairfield. Highlighting one of many such towns that the freeway runs through, the portraits depicted everyday people from the local community." [Some People From Around Here — JON RUBIN](#)

¹⁰ "Spatial Poem No. 1, the first of what would become a series of nine Spatial Poems, by formulating a language-based prompt: 'Word Event: Write a word (or words) on the enclosed card and place it somewhere. Please tell me the word and the place, which will be edited on the world map.' Recipients of Shiomi's "Word Event" request responded with accounts of the word or words they had chosen and the details of the locations where they had placed their cards. Each pin in the hand-drawn map carries a flag with the text she received. Together the pins visualize the entire collaborative process, one in which Shiomi relinquished authorial control and embraced chance. The result is a three-dimensional poem mapped across time and space." [Mieko Shiomi. Spatial Poem No. 1. 1965 | MoMA](#)

Like these projects I often infuse participation into the design and development of aesthetic objects.¹¹ The concept of hybridity as it relates to participatory art encompasses projects that sit in the space between a participatory mindset and an expert-based mindset defined by Huybrechts. A participatory mindset puts the participant front and center, and fully relies on their interaction or participation to form the work. Or as Huybrechts puts it, “makers who are engaged in the participatory mindset are mainly focused on creating constructive participation with and between participants while learning from these interactions, rather than producing friction with the status quo.” (Huybrechts, 110) An artist employing an expert-based mindset will use their knowledge to generate surprising situations with the intent to defamiliarize with the purpose of connecting people or challenging societal structures. Or as the title of chapter one in Russian Theorist Victor Shklovsky’s book *Theory of Prose* calls it “Art as Device.” (Shklovsky, 1) This is often used as a democratizing process to address political power structures. I do not put emphasis on the politicizing or criticizing of society in this thesis project, nor do I completely relinquish control and solely rely on participation. I use my knowledge as a maker and experience in engagement to drive a participation process to create art objects within my own aesthetic sensibility that represents the participant’s experience. Hence a hybrid of ‘expert’ and ‘participant’ mindsets.

Representing the participant’s experience allows their voice to be present in the work, giving those involved a platform to be heard and recognized. This is especially

¹¹ I use the term “object” in the traditional sense that the artwork is a physical object, as in a painting is an object, a sculpture is an object, a photograph is an object, or an installation is an object.

important when working with marginalized populations. According to the *Melbourne Principles* created by the United Nations Environment Programme as a guideline for developing sustainable cities, it emphasizes the importance of empowering people and fostering participation as its seventh principle. It reads...

“Empowering people mobilises local knowledge and resources and enlists the support and active participation of all who need to be involved in all stages, from long-term planning to implementation of sustainable solutions. People have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them. Attention needs to be given to empowering those whose voices are not always heard. (United Nations Environment Programme, 9)

Discourse plays an important role in my hybrid studio practice to make sure I remain a facilitator and amplifier and do not objectify an experience that is not my own. As a facilitator, I prepare a way to guide conversations while remaining open to allow participants to lead. Listening is paramount to my methodology. Its importance in building trust cannot be understated. I listen and interpret to find the meaning or concisely sum up what the participant is communicating.

The goal is to allow participants to see themselves in the artwork, feel a sense of pride and ownership, and communicate a new collective community to the viewer. As an artist I do retain authorship, but this doesn't diminish the community's involvement. Rule number eight in Situations' *New Rules for Public Art* states “Public art is of the people and made with the people, but not always by the people. Artists are skilled creative thinkers as well as makers. They are the charismatic agents who arrive with curious ideas.” (Doherty and Situations 14) This is precisely how I use participation, my

expertise as a maker and creative thinker drives the project, while the participants provide navigation.

When using unconventional and unexpected participant activations the artwork can make a profound impact on the audience and the community engaged. One example of unconventional participation is from an artwork where participants honored American veterans by launching symbols that represented their loved one's service from a Roman siege weapon called a ballista, one hundred feet through the air into a three-thousand-pound wall of clay. This metaphorical act of combat resulted in a relief sculpture embedded with emotional and communal meaning.

I create modalities or systems for people to express emotions they may find difficult to express, like loss, and self-identity. I attempt to open pathways of connection through symbolizing the duality of peoples' similarities and differences. These approaches are evident in my projects *Veterans' Impact Project* (appendix A), *Impressions of Courage* (appendix B), and *Laces of Lynn* (appendix C). Through the *Veterans' Impact Project*, I created a system for American veterans and their loved ones to express the trauma of war.¹² *Impressions of Courage* allowed people affected by cancer to connect with others in the community who shared their experiences and emotional journeys.¹³ *Laces of Lynn* symbolizes the diversity of residents of the City of

¹² Veterans' Impact Project, <https://orloskystudio.com/portfolio/veterans-impact-project/>

¹³ Impressions of Courage, <https://orloskystudio.com/portfolio/impressions-of-courage/>

Lynn, Massachusetts in a relational way (see appendix A-C for full description of all three projects).¹⁴



Figure 4. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky. "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9 x 12 x 12' 2022

¹⁴ Laces of Lynn. <https://www.codaworx.com/projects/laces-of-lynn/>



Figure 5. Kevin Orlosky, Andra Orlosky, and James Robertson. "Veterans' Impact Project."

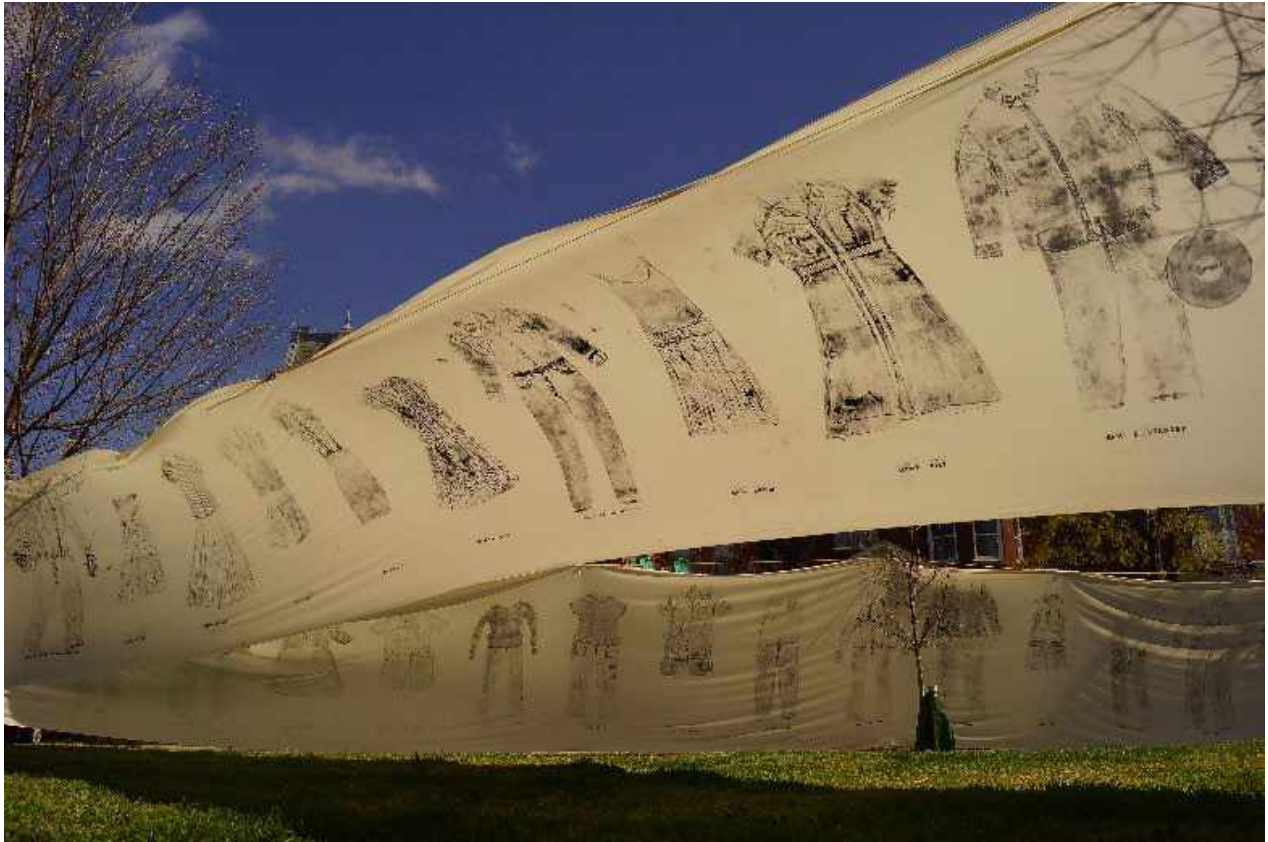


Figure 6. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski. "Impressions of Courage." Ink on Muslin. 7.5 x 733'. 2016

7b. Materiality

An artwork's materials are often what is first experienced by the viewer. Materials play many different roles in the artworks I create, ranging from practical, such as long-lasting weatherable materials for public sculptures, to conceptual, such as light to make immersive environments. Christina Murchoch Mills concludes in her paper *Materiality as the Basis for the Aesthetic Experience in Contemporary Art* that "Materiality significantly informs the content of contemporary art and forms the cornerstone of its conceptual ground." (Mills 35). My projects have a sensibility to their media as content and medium are directly related. Or as Marshall McLuhan puts it *Understanding Media*, "All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms." When conceptualizing a new project, I ask myself several questions regarding the materials used. (1) What medium represents the subject conceptually? Considerations include the medium's ability to communicate, and its relationality to the concept, subject, and viewer. (2) What medium is most appropriate for the environment where the work will be displayed? Limitations factor in when considering this question. (3) How does the medium fit into the process of participation? This question often circles back to question one thus making this process cyclical. The most successful materials will draw direct correlation between all three questions.

I have amassed extensive expertise in various materials and techniques, constantly expanding my knowledge. I readily adapt to new mediums and collaborate with experts when necessary. For my thesis project, I delved into material research, exploring metal fabrication, acrylic fabrication, digital fabrication, Arduino-controlled

lighting¹⁵, epoxy resin, and video processes. In the upcoming case studies, I'll demonstrate the conceptual rationale behind each material choice, the research that informed it, and its implications.

7c. Language.

I often use language¹⁶ as a form of expression. McLuhan writes that language is humanity's first technology and because of language humans were able to let go of their environment and grasp it in new ways. He states "Words are a kind of information retrieval that can range over the total environment and experiences at high speed. Words are complex systems of metaphors and symbols that translate experience into our uttered our outered senses." (McLuhan 61) I see language as the organization of experience; thus making it an important tool for participation.¹⁷ It creates access for

¹⁵ Sparkfun.com describes an Arduino as "Arduino is an open-source platform used for building electronics projects. Arduino consists of both a physical programmable circuit board (often referred to as a microcontroller) and a piece of software, or IDE (Integrated Development Environment) that runs on your computer, used to write and upload computer code to the physical board." (What is an Arduino? - SparkFun Learn)

¹⁶ Language can be defined as "The phenomenon of human symbolic communication, including speech, writing, and sign language." Language is often thought of as being verbal and auditory, although this research project uses a wider definition of that term. For more information, see the Oxford Reference entry on 'language' at <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20111015124143631>

¹⁷ The idea of language as an organization of experience generally follows in line with thinkers like de Saussure, Chomsky, and Lacan. For more information, see [Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology: Undoing the Doctrine of the Course in General Linguistics | Reviews | Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews | University of Notre Dame](#), [Language, Language Development and Reading, by Noam Chomsky](#), and [\(PDF\) Jacques Lacan and Language \(researchgate.net\)](#). **Ferdinand de Saussure**: A Swiss linguist, Saussure is known as one of the fathers of modern linguistics. His theory of structuralism posits that language is a system of signs that creates meaning, and our understanding of the world is mediated through this system. **Noam Chomsky**: An influential linguist and cognitive scientist, Chomsky's theory of generative grammar suggests that the ability to use language is innate to humans. He emphasizes the role of language in shaping thought and human experience. **Jacques Lacan**: A French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, Lacan's work on psychoanalysis and the "Symbolic Order" suggests that language structures the unconscious and shapes the human experience.

those too timid to participate in an artistic activity.¹⁸ It also creates entry points for relational connectivity. I see this similarly to how Nicholas Bourriaud describes Relational Aesthetics. He says:

Because art is made of the same material as the social exchanges, it has a special place in the collective production process. A work of art has a quality that sets it apart from other things produced by human activities. This quality is its (relative) social transparency. If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion, and that form of inter-human negotiation that Marcel Duchamp called the “coefficient of art”, which is a temporal process, being played out here and now.

If we think about exemplary projects of relational aesthetics, dialogue among participants play a crucial role in the aesthetic¹⁹. I use language in the aesthetics of my work a little differently, however it still offers participants and viewers a space for connectivity.

Through my exploration of language in this thesis, I became interested in approaching language in different ways. In the two case studies following I approach participation with a language that is performed rather than spoken or written. By

¹⁸ In my fifteen years of experience of creating projects open to participation, it is common for people to not participate because they “don’t have a creative bone in in their body” or “don’t want to mess it up.” Using something familiar such as language creates a means for participation as a much more comfortable entry point.

¹⁹ Two exemplary projects Nicolas Bourriaud presents in relational aesthetics are Rikrit Tiravanija’s Thai food at 303 Gallery in 1992 [untitled 1992-1995 \(free/still\) - MoMA PS1](#) and Jans Haaning’s *Turkish Jokes* (1994) [Turkish Jokes by Jens Haaning | Baz'art box \(wordpress.com\)](#)

creating a visualization process for ASL, which doesn't have text, language can be translated as form.

8. Case Study One: “We Belong” A Public Art project for a School for the Deaf

As a part of my hybrid studio practice, I collaborate with my partner Andrea Orlosky on commissioned public art projects ranging between temporary, event-based, and permanent installations. Together, we seek to elevate shared experiences and introduce opportunities for connection through community involvement in the artistic process. We work strategically to bring people together, activate their imaginations, and amplify their voices. Our approach to public art is comparable to artist Julia Vogl. Vogl creates “Social Sculptures” where she places participation and engagement at its core. All her works are guided by her ethos:

The art must respond to site or community

The art work must involve or engage others

The art work must employ a strategy of décor (Vogl)



Figure 7. Julia Vogl and Peter Hudson, “Colouring Adult Eczema”. 2020. accessed 11/12/23

Like Vogl's ethos, we continually ask the questions of how do we get more people involved? What is significant to represent? And how do we make the artwork meaningful to the participants and the viewer? We are interested in deepening connections, building communal meaning through interpersonal connections, and providing opportunities for people to express themselves in unconventional ways. Vogl's project "Colouring Adult Eczema," in collaboration with artist Peter Hudson, directly relates to "We Belong," my project described in this case study. "Colouring Adult Eczema" (fig 7) brings awareness to the lived experience of those living with eczema. Each box represents one individual living with eczema, but together it creates a collective picture showing that no two peoples' experiences are the same. The approaches of Vogl and my own look for new ways to share and amplify people's voices of a certain lived experience. We are systematic in the way we engage and manage our projects. Our process guides participants with questions or prompts to produce language as the subject of the work. Our works are participant driven in a hybrid mindset so that the voice and experience of participants lead the project, but the artist's expertise forms the results.

"We Belong" came about in response to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to create a permanent artwork for a school for the Deaf.²⁰ After going through an interview process, we were shortlisted to the top two artist teams. We presented our conceptual approach, which was selected for the commission of \$156,000 USD to design, fabricate, and install permanent artwork for the school.

²⁰ I have chosen to keep the school and its student body anonymous as they are a vulnerable population and details of locations and names are unnecessary to this support paper.



Figure 8. Kevin Orlosky. "What We Seek." Steel, Acrylic, and Spray paint. 33" x 21" x 12". 2022

8a. We Belong: Language

As we began our considerations for this project, we were moved by the transformational experience of students attending the school. For many students it is the first time they are fully immersed in a deaf-centered environment where they build community with other children and adults who have similar lived experiences. The power of their experiences at the school creates deep emotional bonds and a support system that lifts them up into their adult lives. My first consideration was how to approach language. The students and teachers communicate through American Sign Language a performative language that is visual, dimensional, and full of movement. I often use language as a tool for engagement to represent an individual's experiences. The language becomes the content of the work. Most often in the form of text. This is evident in my first study in my research for this thesis project "What We Seek."²¹ (fig. 8)

My investigation into ASL allowed me to understand how it differentiates from spoken language due to its use of iconicity and modality. In *Deaf Culture: Exploring Deaf Communities in the United States*, author Irene Leigh defines these terms as

"Iconicity refers to how the form of language resembles its meaning; modality refers to how the language is expressed. These features are important because they impact how we learn language. While spoken and sign languages use

²¹ For this piece, I engaged with my cohort as participants to find connectivity among us in our first semester. In the spirit of beginning our studies, I asked each of them to answer the question What do you seek? Their responses were made wrapping around in a pyramid. I made a paper version for everyone so that we could have a memento of our shared pursuit of knowledge. They have kept their pyramids in their studios throughout the progression of the MFA program.

different modalities, both have comparable linguistic elements, have similar acquisition timetables, and utilize both hemispheres of the brain.” (Leigh 76)

Iconicity can be more evident in ASL because of its modality. Spoken languages use an auditory modality and sign languages use a visual-gestural modality. For example, the sign for eat looks like a person is putting food into their mouth. ASL does not have a written form and cannot be represented by text because its syntax, or structure, is different from English.²² To be written, ASL must be translated into English (or any other written language). Therefore, when visualizing ASL I must lean on its differences from spoken language in iconicity and visual-gestural modality.

²² As with any language, ASL grammar has complexity, but at a basic level its syntax follows a “topic” + “comment” arrangement. For example, the English sentence of “I sleep in on the weekends” would be signed in ASL as “Weekends me sleep in me.” [ASL Sentence Structure Explained | American Sign Language for Beginners \(youtube.com\)](#)



Figure 9. Chuck Baird, "Art No. 2 (ASL sign for Art)." Painting. 1999



Figure 10. Susan Dupor, "Into Fruition." Oil on Canvas. 40" x 50". 2004



Figure 11. Johnston Grindstaff, "The Police." Photograph

Before I approached how to visually represent ASL, I researched historical precedents for the visualizing of ASL in contemporary art practice. In my research into Deaf Artists and De'Via²³ (Deaf View/Image art) I found many artworks that implied the movement of ASL signs but didn't fully capture the life and expressive qualities of the language. Such as works by Chuck Baird, Susan Dupor, and Johnston Grindstaff.²⁴ Their artwork is more about their emotional experience with deafness, "We Belong" is about the student experience and captures their stories as a linguistic form of communication, not so much as an emotional form of communication. In other words, Baird, Dupor and Grindstaff's work is more a personal piece of artwork – this is a **public** artwork representing the students, which requires a slightly different approach to materiality and participation.

²³ **De'VIA** or Deaf View Image Art is art that examines and expresses the Deaf Experience from a cultural, linguistic, and intersectional point of view. The 4 Elements of De'VIA: **De** - Deaf & Deaf-Blind Expression of Affirmation, Resistance, and Liberation. **V** - View of how Deaf & Deaf-Blind experience the world. **I** - Images/Motifs/Symbols of the Deaf Experience. **A** - Art, Activism, Aesthetics, and Authentic Expressions of the Deaf Experience. ([DE'VIA | MDHAC \(museumofdeaf.org\)](http://DE'VIA | MDHAC (museumofdeaf.org)))

²⁴ Chuck Baird, Susan Dupor, and Johnston Grindstaff can be found at [Deaf Art \(deaf-art.org\)](http://Deaf Art (deaf-art.org))



Figure 12. Kevin Orlosky, "Imagine Everything Possible." Digital Photograph. 2023

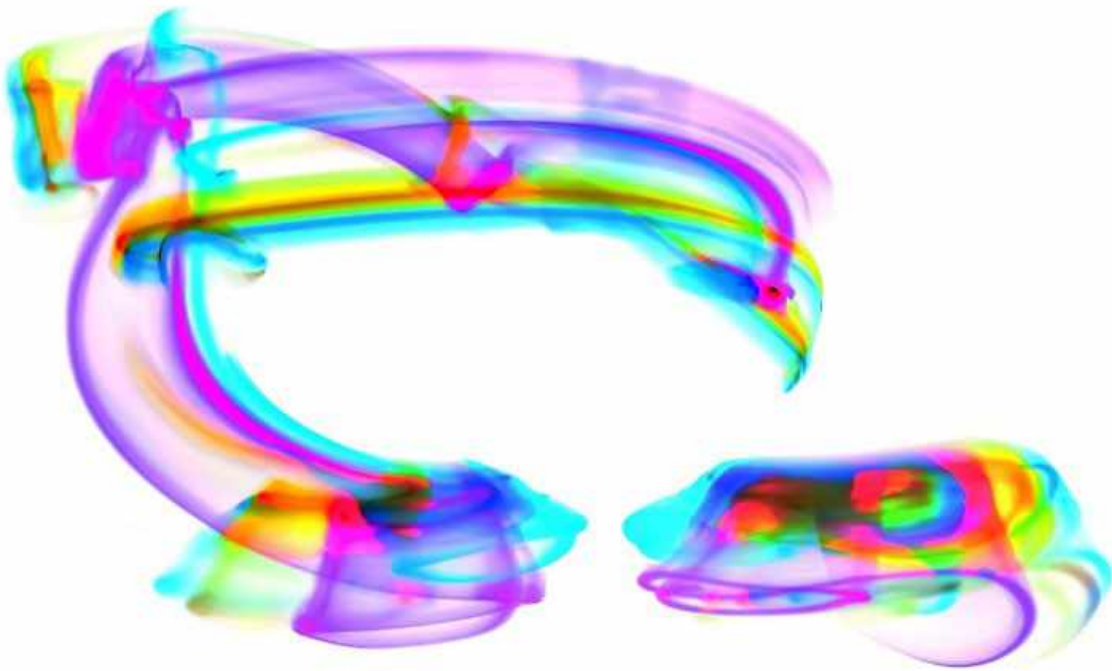


Figure 13. Kevin Orlosky, "We Belong Here." Digital Photograph. 2023

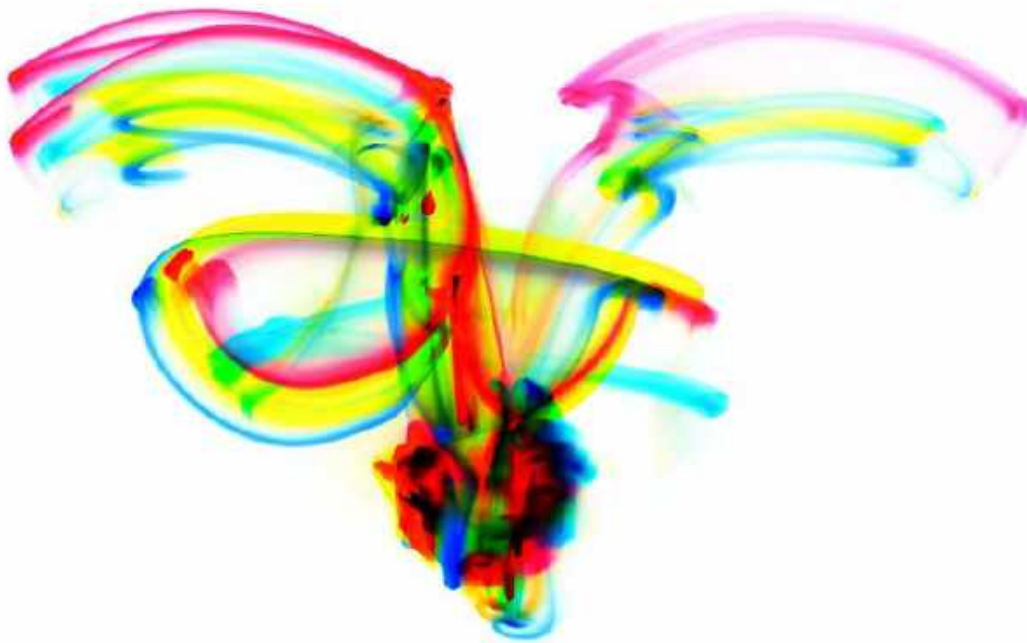


Figure 14. Kevin Orlosky, “Believe In Your Dreams.” Digital Photograph. 2023

8b. We Belong: Materiality

To visualize ASL into art the consideration moved to materiality. What material can capture the essence of ASL? I became interested in using light to capture the language's expressiveness as it is a pure representation of the movement which allows the language to become the medium and captures the energy, form, and spirit of the message. If I consider Marshal McLuhan's theories on electric light and his claim that it holds no 'content,' the message of the participant becomes the medium thus mirroring his famous phrase, "the medium is the message." (McLuhan, 2) Using light to

communicate the content, in this case actual messages representing individuals in a communal space, has the potential to open more points of connectivity. It allows us to see parts of society that may be outside of our views, illuminating truths we didn't know existed.

How do I capture these messages using light? If the participant's hands omit light, I can capture the movement through photography. I experimented with many different manufacturers of light gloves marketed for party and costume use. By using these gloves, messages are signed in ASL during a long exposure photography. (fig. 11-13) This shows the movement of the hands in one single image. I found that the gloves with different colors for each finger worked the best to represent the subtle finger movements in ASL. However, these gloves only have light on one side of the hand. I either needed to modify these gloves or make my own. I created custom light gloves utilizing the knowledge gained through my material research into light-based art using a microcontroller called an Arduino (Appendix D for material research project Mycorrhizal).²⁵ These gloves utilize neopixels, or LED strips where each light can be individually addressed, on both sides of the fingers and palm. The neopixels give me the ability to control the color on each finger.

²⁵ My research into Arduino is exemplified in my project Mycorrhizal. This interactive installation projects onto the floor in light community drawings of mycelium (the root structure of mushrooms). When a viewer stands in the projection it springs to life with a breath and a heartbeat visualized in the light projection. See Appendix D for full description.



Figure 15. Eight different gloves tested and used in my research.

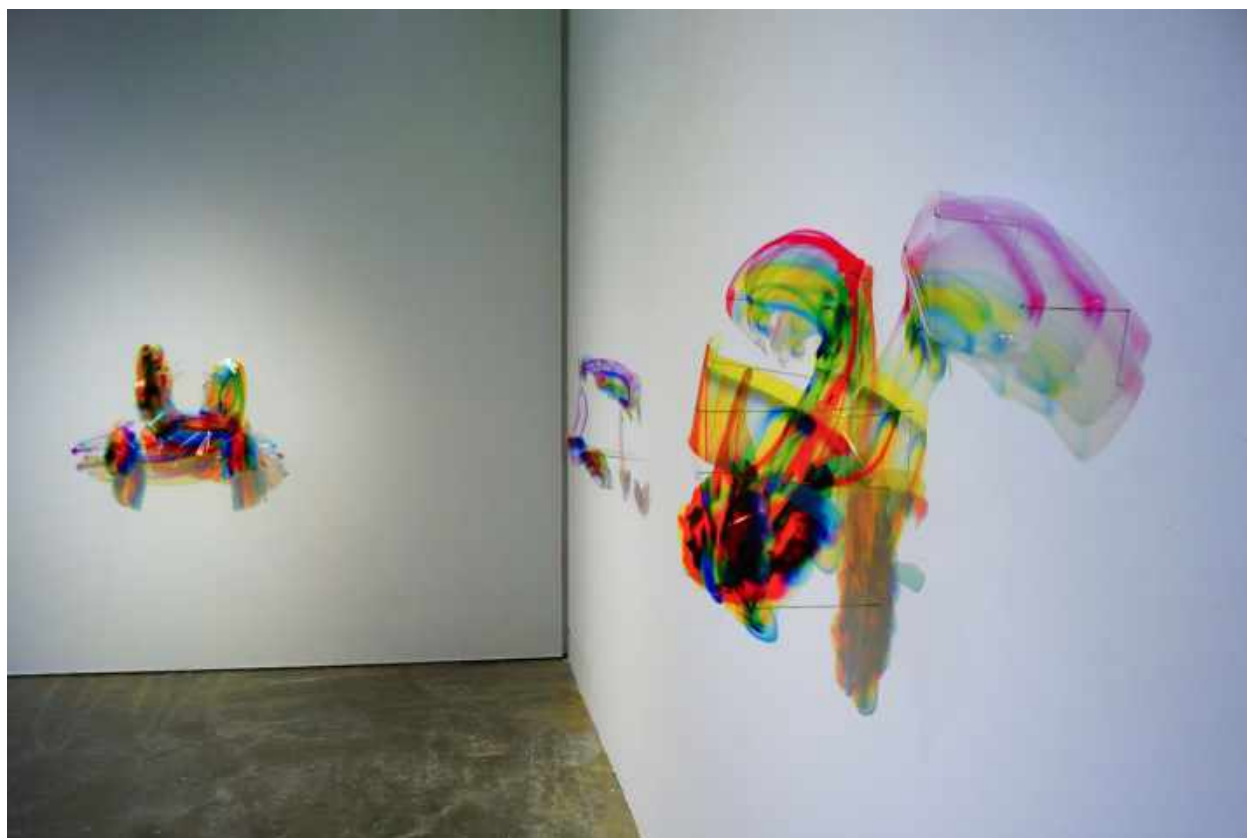


Figure 16. Kevin Orlosky, State of Practice installation view

I used three example messages for my initial photographs, they are “Imagine everything is possible” (fig 16), “We belong here” (fig 17), and “Believe in your dreams.” (fig 18)²⁶ I first printed the test images large-scale onto a transparency so that the movement and color became activated by light. These images were quite striking. However, I realized that the two-dimensional images lost some of the expressive qualities of ASL. It didn’t fully embody the sign and lacked the form and dimensionality of ASL. To bring these photographs into three dimensions they were broken into sections, curved, and layered to show how the signs move through space. Similar to

²⁶ These phrases were used as samples of what students may come up with as messages to future students.

how photographers have used paper tole²⁷ or photostereosynthesis²⁸, I emulated the dimension and movement of the sign on a life-sized one to one scale. The work then becomes a three-dimensional representation of four dimensions, it embodies the sign and the signer not only in three-dimensional space but in the temporal dimension referencing the duration of the sign.



Figure 17. Kevin Orlosky, "Imagine Everything is Possible." Digital Print on transparency. 2023

²⁷ **Paper Tole** also known as 3D Decoupage is a craft where identical prints of the same picture are individually cut out, shaped and built one on top of each other, using silicone glue as a spacer, to form a delightful, three-dimensional picture. (<http://papertole.co.uk>)

²⁸ **Photostereosynthesis** a lost imaging technology developed by the co-inventor of contemporary cinema, Louis Lumière. This imaging technology, released in 1920, produces dimensionally deep and multi-layered images through a series of stacked photographs. In this process, individual frames are shot at extremely small depths of field (wide aperture) at incrementally increasing focal lengths (focus pull), which has the effect of "depth-slicing" of a dimensional space with the help of focus. Each individual exposure is printed as a transparent positive on glass and stacked to produce a composite 3D photo with the scene "entombed" in a translucent image several centimeters thick. The resulting composite image is somewhat similar to a hologram but is a physically volumetric representation. (Hertz <https://coneceptlab.com/photostereosynthesis>)



Figure 18. Kevin Orlosky, "Believe in Your Dreams." Digital Print on transparency. 2023

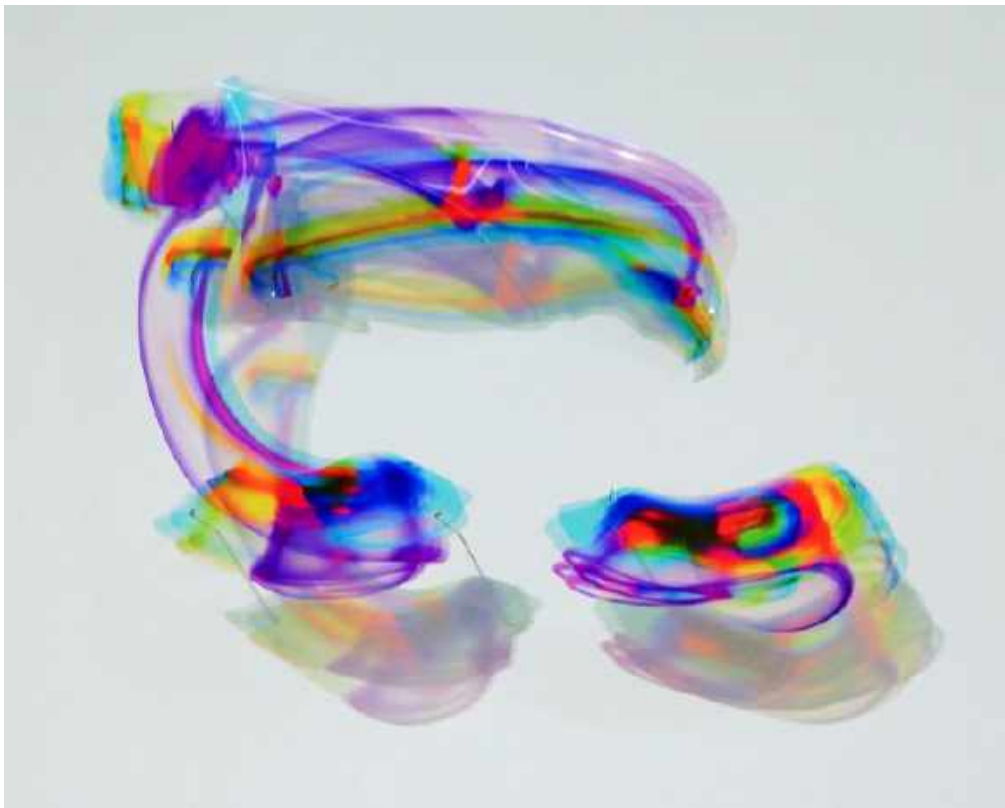


Figure 19. Kevin Orlosky, "We Belong Here." Digital Print on transparency. 2023



Figure 20. Kevin Orlosky, "Believe in Your Dreams." (Detail). Digital Print on transparency. 2023

These artworks were successful in representing the movement, form, and dynamism of ASL but the materials are not suitable for a permanent public art installation. There are limitations to material choices when considering permanence. These limitations include longevity, durability, weatherability, and safety. I considered various metals, such as painted steel or aluminum, but I was worried their opacity would remove the activation of the message through light. Using a transparent material became crucial to the concept. In our early meetings with the selection committee comprised of School representatives, architects, and State representatives, we settled on an indoor location for the sculpture. This broadened the material consideration as

weather was no longer a concern. I connected with a glass fabricator, presented the works I had created and talked through our vision. We came up with a process to pull and layer large colored ribbons of glass and form them to match the movements of each sign. These glass sculptures will be suspended in a large hall that is a hub for activity in the school.

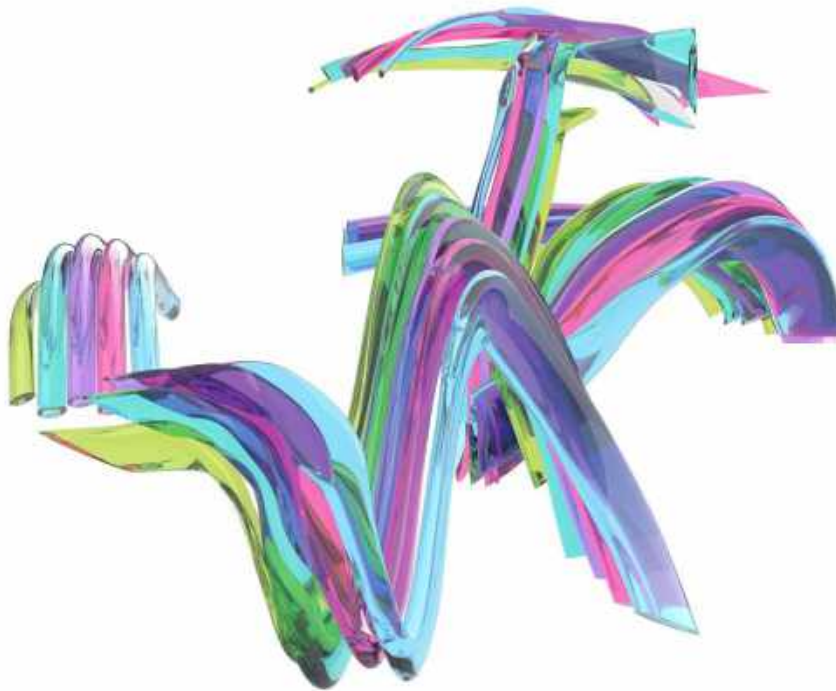


Figure 21. Kevin Orlosky. "Be confident, grow, you are smart." digital rendering in glass. 2024



Figure 22. Kevin Orlosky. "Be confident, grow, you are smart" digital rendering in glass. 2024



Figure 23. Kevin Orlosky. "Be confident, grow, you are smart" digital rendering in glass. 2024

8c. We Belong: Participation

Now that I had an approach to language and materiality, the way I considered participation with the students brings it all together. When I thought about the transformational experience of students as a never-ending ephemeral process, I set out to encompass past, present, and future so that the work is a living legacy and can empower generations of students to come. This led me to the question; how can I engage students using ASL to represent this impact? We asked students to create messages to future students as a form of stewardship for this transformative experience. Their messages become the artwork creating a legacy that every new student for years to come can feel a part of. It creates a sense of ownership and belonging in a new facility, building familiarity of place for current students.

Since the artwork is comprised of messages to new students, it becomes about the experience of finding place and discovering one's selves. This allows the work to stay fresh, as incoming students can look to the artwork for inspiration and guidance. The artwork gives the students an opportunity to pass on their wisdom to future classes in a dynamic way that celebrates ASL and the deaf experience. It builds deep communal meaning that "transcends individual perspective and experience." (Borstal and Korza, 10) The participation process was conducted over three distinct sessions: (1) introduction, (2) message development, and (3) message capturing. Our goal was to capture each message created by the students, narrow down the messages by school level and select three to six messages to be fabricated into the final glass artwork. All photographs of student messages are compiled into a book and digital archive to be kept in the school's library. This book is the tool to create a living legacy, it provides the school opportunity to develop curriculum around the messages in years to come. For

example, students can create a performance of the messages and add new ones in consecutive years.

The first session we introduced the project to all the students and demonstrated how their messages will be photographed. It is important that all students fully understand the process and know what to expect at every step. Additionally, I presented the engagement worksheet to the teachers, as they are responsible for the message development session. We provided them questions to ask the students and guidance in how to help students find their messages.²⁹ The third session we worked with a small group of students to select three messages from each of the elementary, middle, and high school level submissions. These students then signed the messages captured for the final piece. Additionally, all students signed their own messages photographed to be included in the book and digital archive. One hundred and twenty-eight staff and student messages were signed in light during this engagement session. Archiving every student and staff member involved allows the artwork to become a living legacy opening the door to continued curriculum development around the project. It is a metaphorical passing of the torch to the school saying, “you now own this project and control where it goes from here.”

²⁹ Some examples of phrases created by students translate to “Stay strong.” “Leave an impression that is good.” and “Be a nice friend.”

Elementary Message

1. Support and help.
2. Socialization accessible, not feel alone.
3. Be happy and friendly.



Figure 24. Kevin Orlosky. "Socialization Accessible, Not Feel Alone" Digital Photograph. 2024



Figure 25. Kevin Orlosky. "Be Happy and Friendly" Digital Photograph. 2024



Figure 26. Kevin Orlosky. "Support and Help" Digital Photograph. 2024

Middle School Messages

1. Be confident, grow, you are smart.
2. You can do anything.
3. We Terriers stick together.

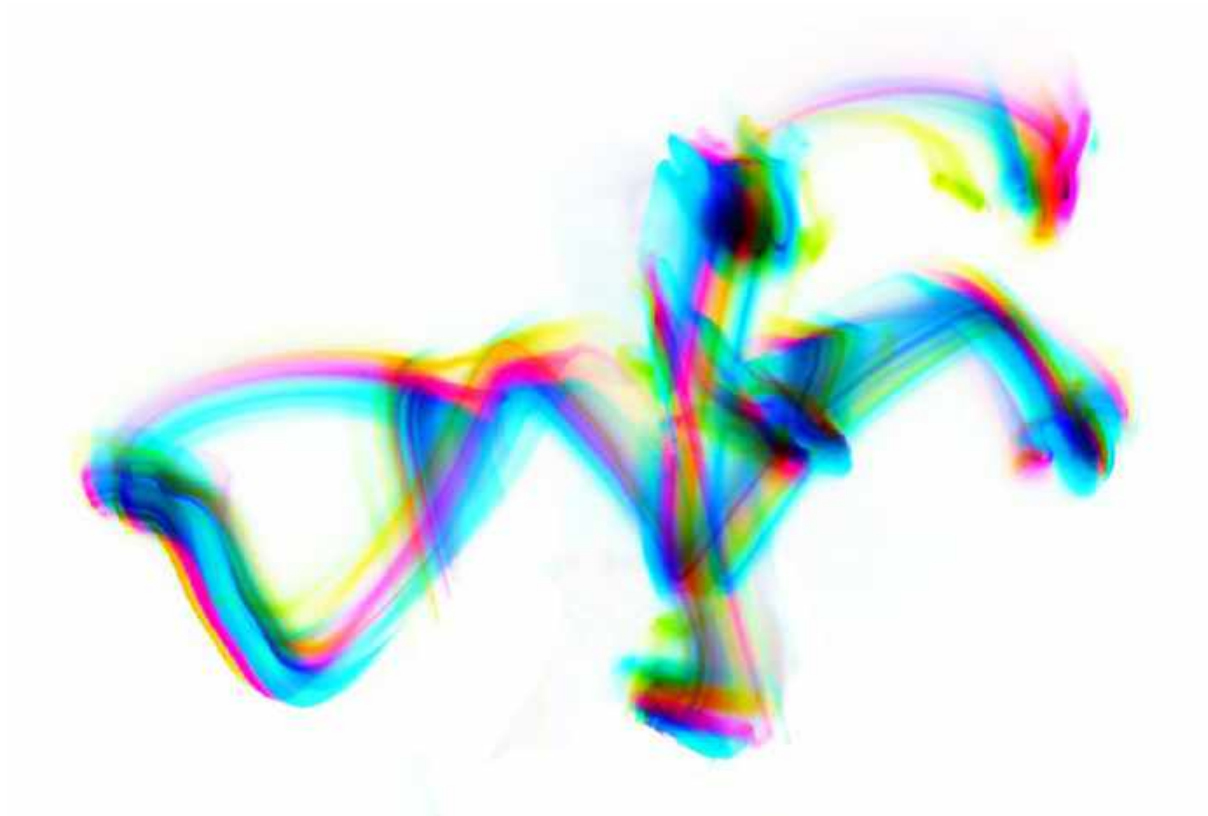


Figure 27. Kevin Orlosky. "Be Confident, Grow, You are Smart" Digital Photograph. 2024



Figure 28. Kevin Orlosky. "We Terriers Stick Together" Digital Photograph. 2024

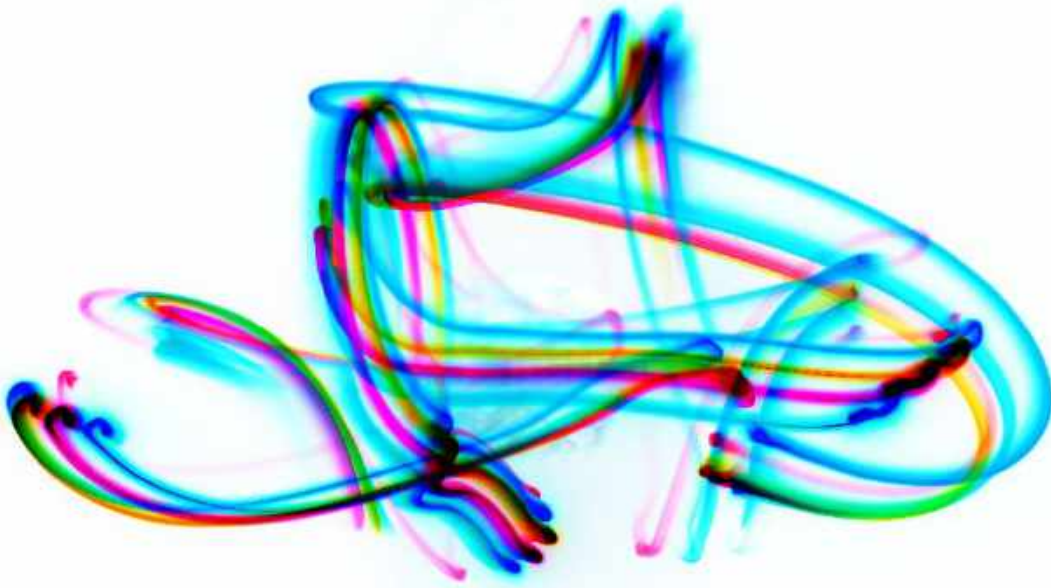


Figure 29. Kevin Orlosky. "You Can Do Anything" Digital Photograph. 2024

High School

1. We are family.
2. Just be courage.
3. You are important.

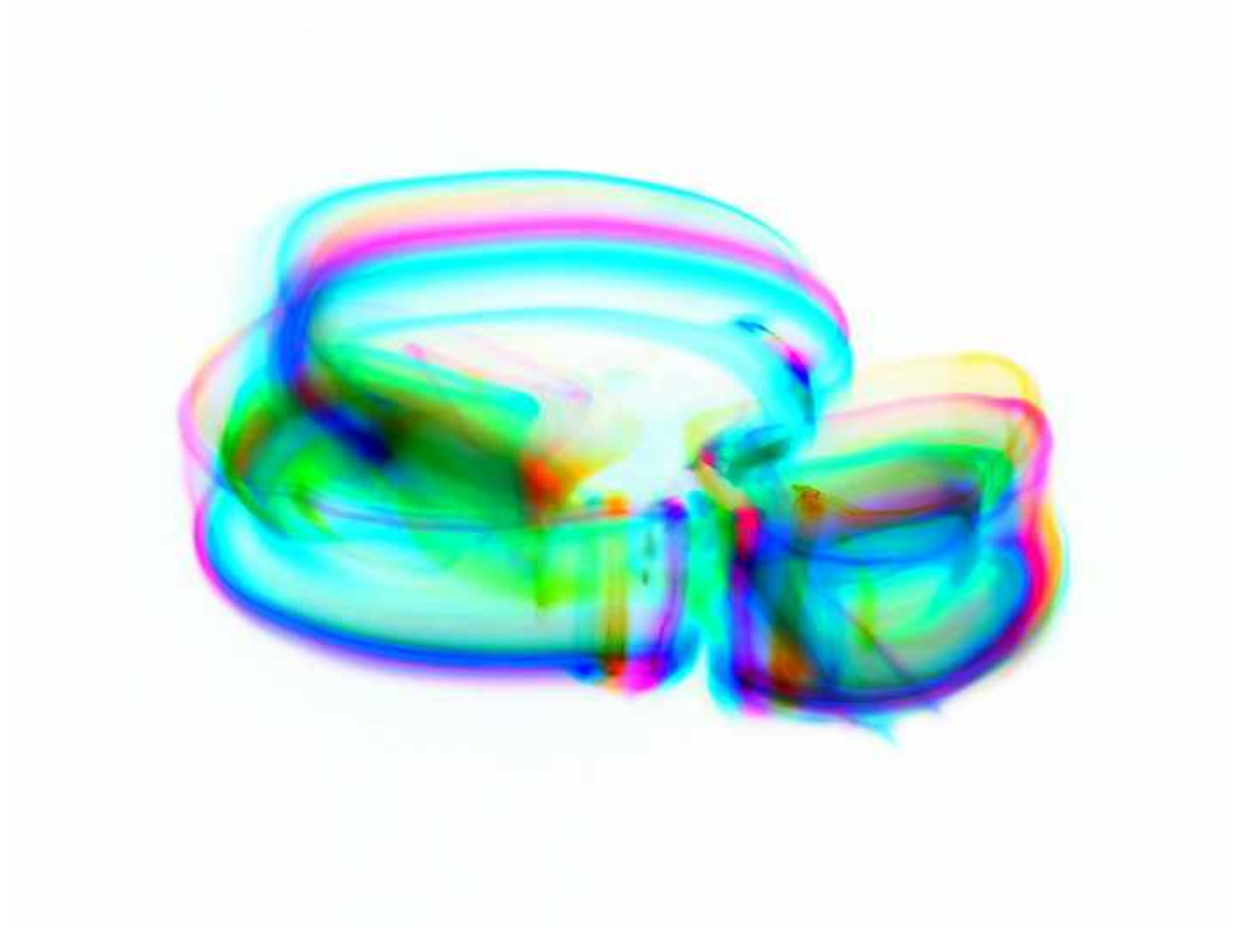


Figure 30. Kevin Orlosky. "We Are Family" Digital Photograph. 2024

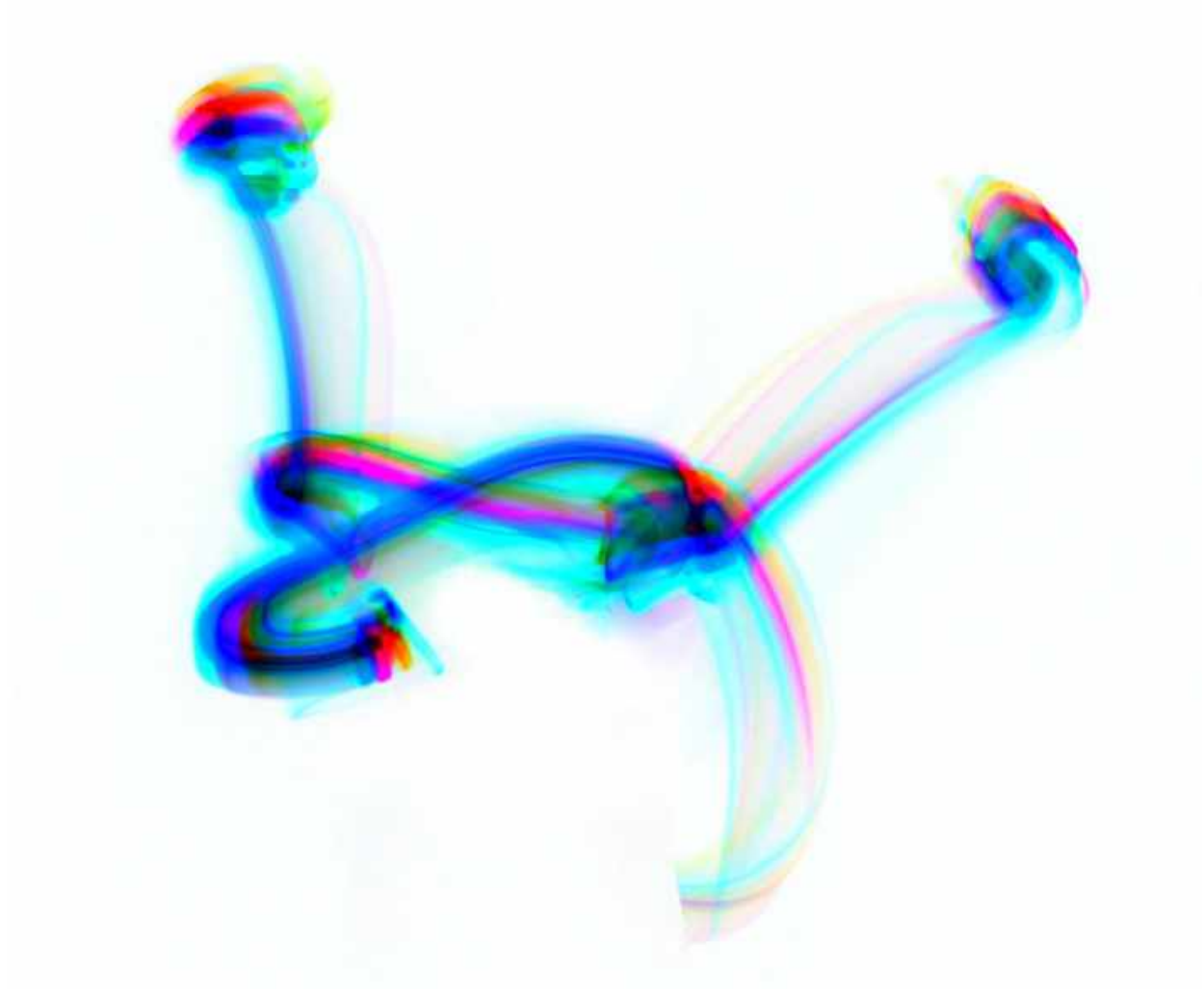


Figure 31. Kevin Orlosky. "Just Be Courage" Digital Photograph. 2024

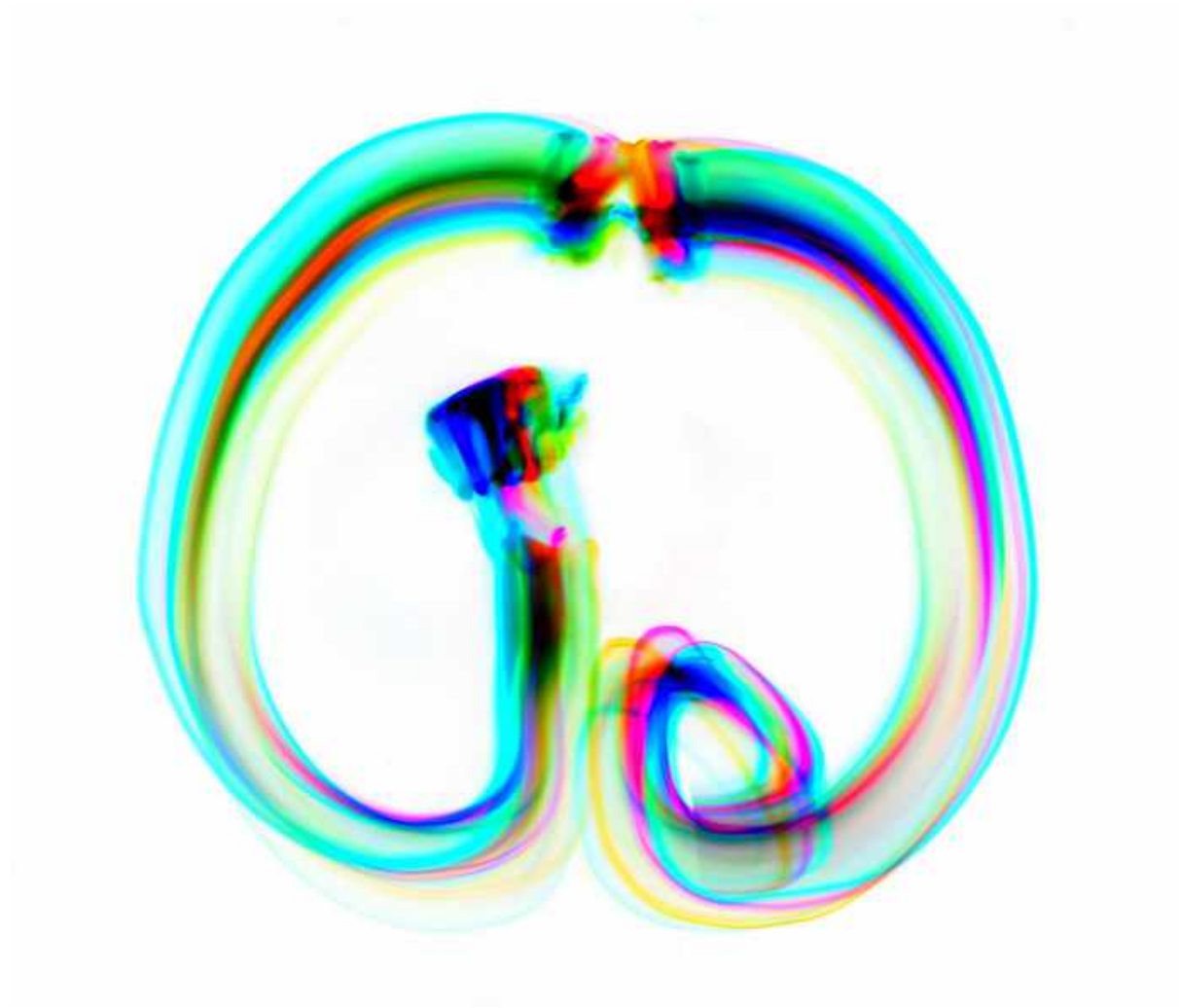


Figure 32. Kevin Orlosky. "You Are Important" Digital Photograph. 2024

9. Case Study Two: Expressions in ASL, Gallery art expressing lived experience in participation with a Deaf individual.

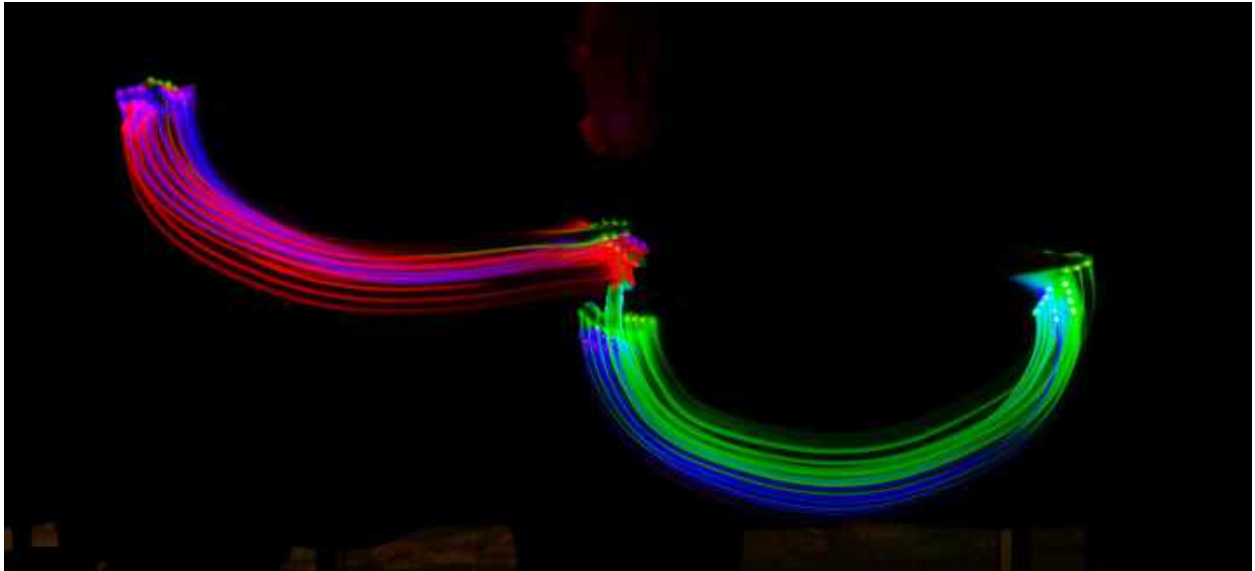


Figure 33. Kevin Orlosky "Spiritual Balance" Digital Photograph. 2024

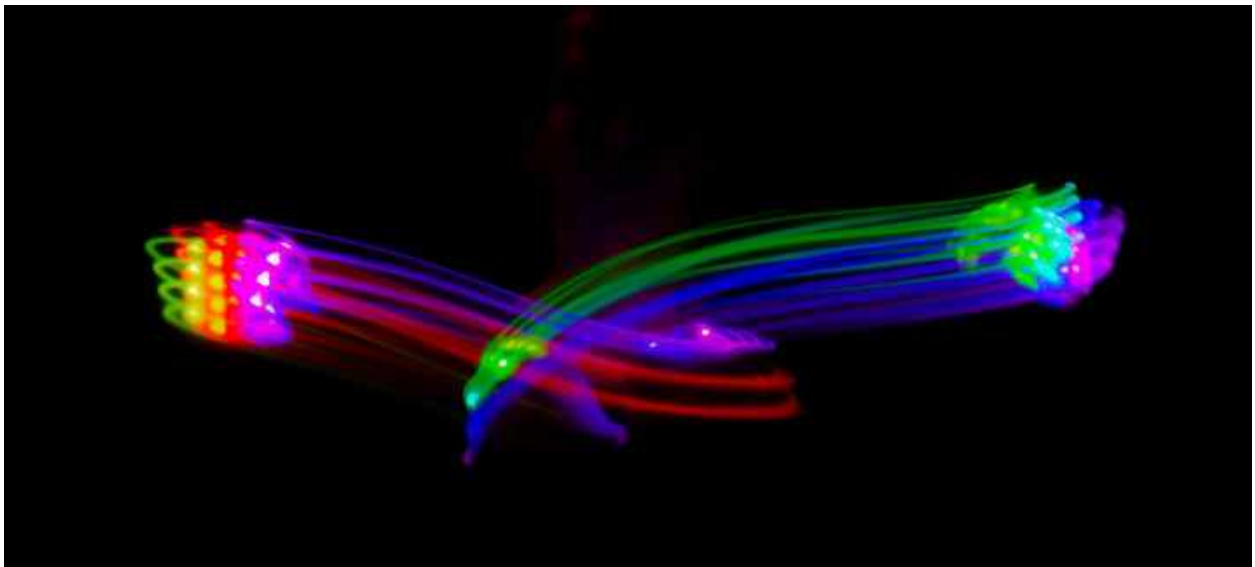


Figure 34. Kevin Orlosky "Freedom" Digital Photograph. 2024

“We Belong” takes a communal approach creating art with the primary audience of members within its community.³⁰ My exploration into representing lived experience of D/HH people led me to consider the different ways to embody one’s experiences with ASL. I connected with Shannon Anderson when she responded to a post on Facebook calling for participants.³¹ She is Deaf and uses ASL as her first language to communicate. For my Thesis Exhibition I created four artworks that embody Anderson’s expressions in ASL. The artwork I created with Anderson speaks to the practice of Deaf Sound Artist, Christine Sun Kim. Her work is about her relationship to sound and how sound plays an important role in her life. She began to see her language (ASL) as music and consider how other movements or expressions are full of sound.

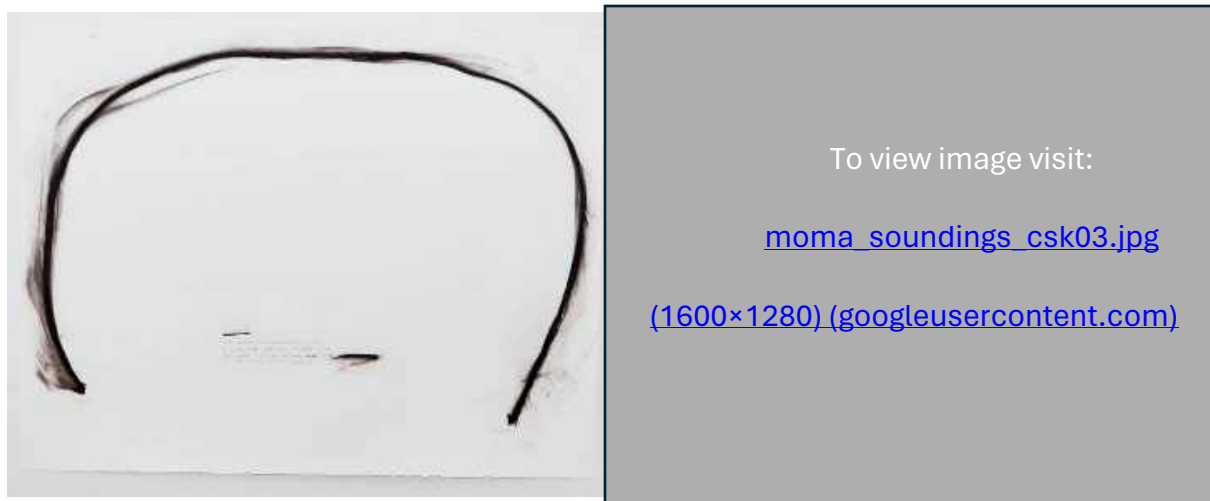


Figure 35. Christine Sun Kim, "All Day" (left) and "All Night" (right), 2013, Charcoal and pen on paper, Each 38.5 x 20 inches, From her Show "Soundings" at MoMA, New York. [SOUNDINGS \(moma.org\)](https://www.moma.org/soundings)

³⁰ Students, their families, and faculty, of the School for the Deaf

³¹ [Orlosky Studio - Hi everyone, we just wanted to share with you... | Facebook](#)

Her drawings *All Day* and *All Night* (fig 31) illustrate how she sees ASL as music. The drawings resemble the signs “all day” and “all night.” She thought if she were to repeat and slow the signs it would visually be like a piece of music. She includes English text as musical notations.

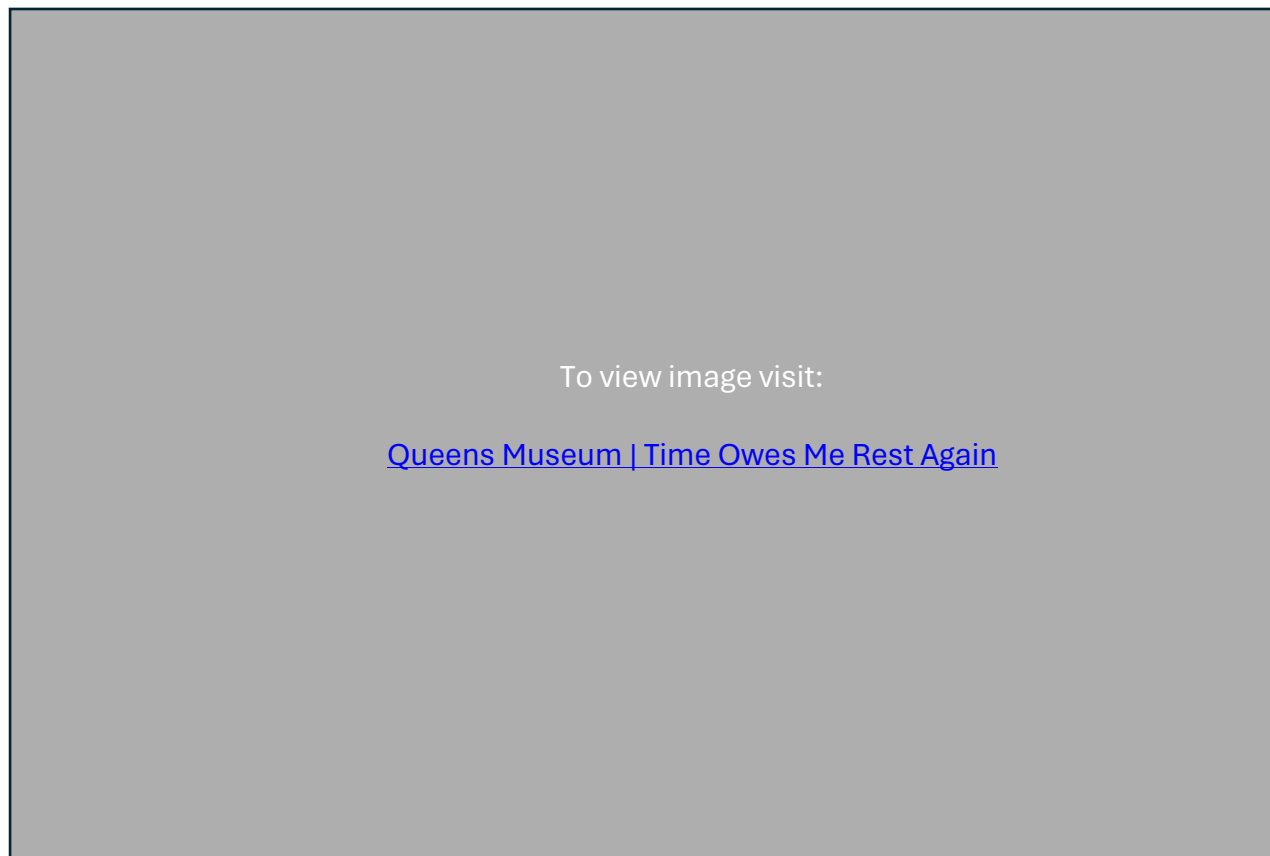


Figure 36. Christine Sun Kim. “Time Owes Me Rest Again.” Mural, dimensions variable. Queens Museum. 2022

Her installation in the Queens Museum in 2022, *Time Owes Me Rest Again* (fig 32) plays with the structures of language and music notation to depict her relationship to sound. The mural illustrates the movement of the signs across a large, curved wall within the museum. There is a comic-like playfulness to the work that adds a bit of humor. “Humor brings a level of access, kind of like a meme,” Kim says. “If I were just

mad without the humor, I think it might be uncomfortable and people would leave. They wouldn't do the complex contemplative work that I want them to do."

There are many ways in which Kim's work and my work speak to each other. She's taking her own experience with language and visualizing it differently than it is communicated. Through humor it communicates that ASL is a rich language full of music, and that it's not just gestures. She uses the iconicity of ASL to blend its modality with the modality of music. I use a similar device in my work to visualize ASL with color and movement, but the work is not about music or my own experience. My artworks seek out to give Anderson the opportunity to express her lived experience as a Deaf person in a Hearing world.

9a. Expressions in ASL: Participation

Anderson's participation could also be described as a collaboration since the participation is one-to-one. I took the participatory process from "We Belong" and adapted it to an individualized approach to dig deeper into messages Anderson expressed. My initial approach was to ask her to generate a message that explores concepts around her experience of being Deaf in a Hearing world. Some of the questions I asked her to think about were:

Is there a specific topic you want the art to address? Something related to your lived experience, something inspiring, do you want to confront something?

Is there knowledge you wish to share? Or something you feel is important for others to know?

Think about how it relates to your personality. It could be serious, silly, whimsical, witty, provocative, etc.

Think about the audience. Who are you speaking to? Is the audience specific or broad? Is there more than one audience? If so, is there a primary and secondary audience?

After some discussion, Anderson presented me with signs that portray her experience and spiritual journey. The signs are not messages per say, but expressions of self. The signs translate into English as: “Centered/Spiritual Balance,” “Freedom,” “Let Go/Surrender,” “Self-Forgiveness and Holding Hurt Heart.” “Gravitational Attraction, Anticipations, Looking for Hope,” “Hope, Trust/Faith/Holding On, Endure/Persevere.”³² Anderson’s interpretation of the project and the prompts led her to express the things that are important to her and the emotions she has experienced as a Deaf person living in a Hearing World. The signs captured are more poetic than phrasing a message and conceptually fit with the abstraction that happens through the process of translating the signs into visual art.³³ This illustrates how embracing uncertainty can lead to something different than intended.³⁴

³² Videos of signs can see here. Password: ASL

<https://1drv.ms/f/s!Agh2Fqe4a9BFhuAe0UVMZQtfZMA9A?e=j8ZkML>

³³ I explain this more in the materiality and language sections.

³⁴ In every participatory project there are inherent risks and varying levels of uncertainty. Collaborating with participants to create art is a form of “deliberately embracing uncertainty, since the viewpoints of the participants can have a radically innovative impact on the project” (Huybrechts, 41). For me, this venture into a risky process is exciting. Allowing Anderson’s perspectives to enter the conversation builds the conceptual foundation of what the content really means to the art. It can open new avenues for viewer interpretation. This can be “characterized as a risky trade-off between makers and participants, wherein both parties engage in a participatory exchange being uncertain about what this exchange might bring.” (Huybrechts, 55) It is my role as artist to be the navigator to keep projects on track and moving forward while remaining flexible and willing to make changes and turn down paths that may

For Anderson, participating in this project is about awareness of the Deaf experience. She has allowed herself to be vulnerable to the viewer through expressing the challenges she has faced engaging in the Hearing world. Giving Anderson this platform opens up opportunity for viewers to understand. Relate, and consider the accessibility needs for Deaf and Hearing worlds to integrate.

I conducted two photo sessions with Anderson capturing each sign using several different light gloves through photo and video. The iconicity and modality of the signs are expressive so that the movements are understandable to me as a non ASL user.³⁵ Anderson presented more signs than could be produced for my Thesis Exhibition. Through an ASL-English Interpreter we discussed what these expressions mean to her, and ways I can best represent their significance into each artwork. We agreed to focus a sculptural approach for the signs “Freedom,” and “Spiritual Balance,” and show the rest through video.

9b. Expressions in ASL: Language

For this case study I approached language through the lens of translation. How can I represent the deeper meaning of each sign in ASL? Are the artworks legible to ASL users? Do they need to be? Representing the meaning of each sign truly comes into play when considering materiality and installation, which I describe in the next

lead to unexpected results. Because it is within these unexpected results and “risky trade-offs” that something profound can emerge.

³⁵ For example for the sign for “Spiritual Balance” Andersons arms are outstretch to the side with each middle finger pointing down. Her two hands swing towards the center of her body where her middle fingers align vertically. The form it creates is asymmetrically balanced metaphorically representing its meaning. This is recognizable to me as a non-ASL user because of the legibility of the sign’s iconicity.

section. The question of legibility has been constant throughout both case studies in this support paper and will continue to be throughout the development of this body of work. There is a level of abstraction that occurs in the process of translating ASL signs into visual art. The gestures of the sign are broken down into form, shape, color, and movement. Details of the hands and facial expressions are lost. Both of which play important roles in ASL. Additionally, there are different geographical dialects of ASL. “ASL vocabulary varies across the country (USA), with different regions having their own unique signs for certain words and phrases. For example, the sign for “coffee” in the Northeastern United States is different from the sign for “coffee” in the Southern United States.” (Exploring the Regional Variations in American Sign Language asl-kids.com) These are all ways that make the messages, phrases, or expressions more difficult to read as I have received a variety of responses from ASL users when viewing the artworks. In most cases ASL users can see the sign once they know what it is, while others can’t see it at all. Considering that legibility differs from person to person suggests some people are more apt to see the sign abstractly and not be constrained to a literal translation. What is successfully evident is the translation of signs in four dimensions, three dimensional and temporal space.³⁶

³⁶ A fascinating anecdote to the four-dimensionality of these artworks is that during a classroom critique of “We Belong Here,” “Imagine Everything is Possible.” And “Believe in Your Dreams.” It was suggested that the artworks represent four dimensions. Weeks later during a discussion with Shannon Anderson she said, “Deaf people say ASL is 4D,” I was immediately floored by this comment and shared with her the same conclusion from my critique.

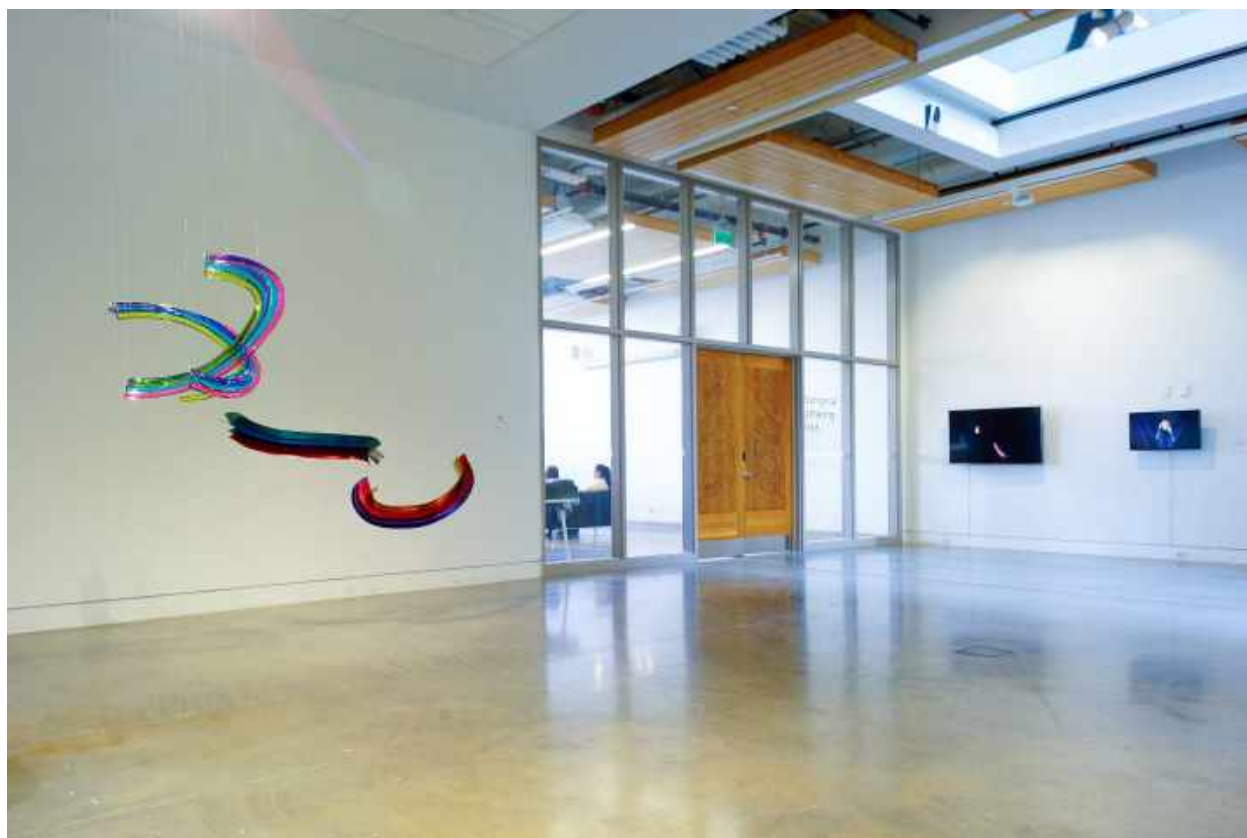


Figure 37. Kevin Orlosky, Thesis Exhibition installation. 2024

9c. Expressions in ASL: Materiality

The material research of this case study examined how different materials effectively translate ASL and the concepts behind Anderson's expressions. It is the materiality that connects participation and language together. I have identified the use of light to act as messenger and used transparent printed materials to showcase that, but does the translation change with other materials both transparent and opaque? As a result of my discussions with Anderson, I set out to approach each sculpture with a different material. For "Freedom" Anderson communicated it represents her struggle as a Deaf person to "thrive and survive, to break barriers, lift off, freeing myself of expectations and accepting what is." (Anderson) The photograph of the sign is reminiscent of a bird's wings. I chose to produce this with cast epoxy resin. The transparency of the epoxy

resin in the form of the sign allows it to be activated by light and gives the sculpture a sense of weightlessness as if it could fly away.

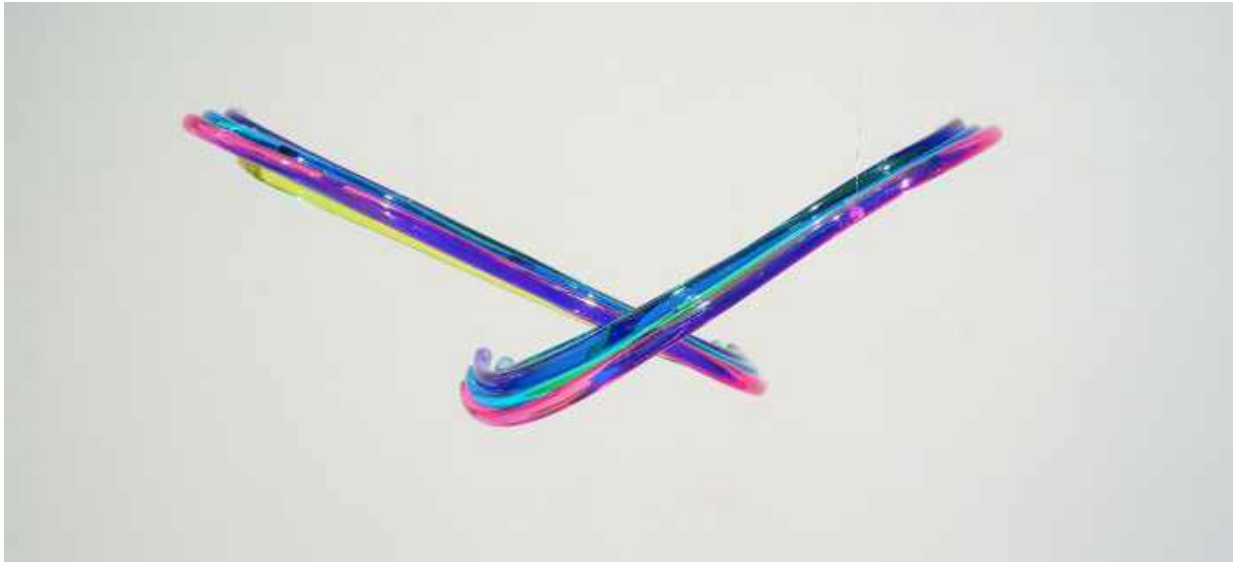


Figure 38. Kevin Orlosky, "Freedom." (front view). Epoxy Resin 2024



Figure 39. Kevin Orlosky, "Freedom." (Back View). Epoxy Resin. 2024



Figure 40. Kevin Orlosky, "Freedom." (quarter view). Epoxy Resin. 2024



Figure 41. Kevin Orlosky, "Spiritual Balance." Steel and Enamel. 2024

To Anderson "Spiritual Balance" is about being centered in the spiritual world and finding and holding inner peace. It is a constant negotiation that is not always aligned. The form of the sign is balanced asymmetrically drawing attention to the duality of opposing forces or separate entities finding balance. I chose to fabricate this sculpture from steel to see if an opaque heavy material could give the appearance of being lightweight and possess a similar light activation and expression of the movement that is witnessed with transparent materials. For both "Freedom" and "Spiritual Balance" I suspended them from the ceiling so they would float with a sense of weightlessness. By producing them on a one-to-one scale and having space for the viewer to put themselves in the place of the signer embodies the sign to the viewer.



Figure 42. Kevin Orlosky, "Self-Forgiveness and Holding Hurt Heart." Digital Photograph 2024



Figure 43. Kevin Orlosky, "Self-Forgiveness and Holding Hurt Heart." Digital Rendering. 2024

When reviewing the images from the first photo session, the sign for “Self-Forgiveness/Holding Hurt Heart” made a beautiful portrait that expresses Anderson’s “spiritual journey of unpacking, healing, and educating self through experiences, stories, and or visual effects of what I see through my day.” (Anderson) Even though I had concluded the signs lose their dimensionality when reproduced two-dimensionally, printing this as a digital photograph gives context to the viewer that Anderson is a real person to connect with. Anderson specifically mentioned when explaining this sign that Deaf people can communicate through windows, or any other transparent barrier that would block sound. I found it appropriate to nod to this by displaying the photograph mounted on the wall with a framed piece of glass representing a window suspended in front of it. The viewer can then peer through the window to visually communicate with the portrait of Anderson.

One aspect that the sculptures and photographs lack in representation of ASL is the directional flow of the sign’s movement. It is more evident in the simpler gestures of “Freedom” and “Spiritual Journey,” but it is not explicit. For the viewer to witness the directional flow, all of Anderson’s signs are presented though video. The video only shows the movement in trails of light. This fills the gap missing in the sculptural works while at the same time lacking the sign’s form materialized in the sculptures. The pairing of these two media embodies the signs more holistically.³⁷

³⁷ Link to video <https://1drv.ms/v/s!Agh2Fqe4a9BFh4weOGRfqmQ28kS4kg?e=S7V1mE>

10. One Thing Next to Another

Each of the case studies – “We Belong” and “Expressions in ASL” – approach the subject of visualizing ASL with the same bank of considerations. However, the artworks arrive at their presentations differently. On the surface “We Belong” could be categorized as Public Art. While the goal for the project from the commissioning body’s perspective is to design, fabricate, and install a permanent work of art, the art of the project expands beyond that. Public art projects require input from multiple players with different expertise and knowledges to work together towards a common solution. I rely on the school’s knowledge of ASL and D/HH culture, the glass studio’s knowledge and expertise in glass, and engineer’s knowledge to ensure the artwork is secure and safe. But this project expands further than just making an art object for the school. The art is the “thing” that is produced when considering the relationality of all its parts - artist, maker, materials, participant, engagement, space, and place. In the book *Making Things Public* by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel they describe “things” as “matters of concern around which people gather,” (Latour and Weibel) A. Telier³⁸ states in *Design Things* that “Things are a matter of concern insofar as they are able to offer people new possibilities of experience.” (A. Telier, 77) In this case the art is the relativity between the participation process of students generating messages to future students, the capturing and producing of the messages into objects, the legacy for the school to keep the messages a living entity that grows and changes over time, and the experience of the viewer.

³⁸ Pseudonym for an author collective

“Expressions in ASL” could be categorized as trans/inter/multidisciplinary gallery practice, but that is a superficial assumption that fails to see the bigger picture of how the artworks fit within a hybrid studio practice. Like “We Belong,” the art is the “thing” that relates together the participation with Anderson, the way the materials translate the message, the object created, and the viewer experience. Both these case studies make the relationality of all its parts the art, while simultaneously developing a relationship between the projects.

Not only is “We Belong” my first attempt to create a continuous living work of art, it is also the first time I use a public art project to inform a gallery project. In the past, my gallery-based projects were disconnected from my public art projects. This thesis illustrates how I can combine my knowledge of materiality, participation, language, as well as my larger bank of considerations while borrowing from different disciplines and traditions to build a more expansive practice that isn’t limited to the conventional parameters of any field, discipline, or tradition. What I have done with my thesis project is come to an understanding that my practice can have infinite ways in which it manifests. Some of these can resemble disciplines, fields, or traditions and at the same time they don’t have to. What I will carry with me beyond this thesis project is that all these manifestations inform one another in a nonlinear and nonhierarchical way. Returning to Stocker and Schlopf they say “Art is the food of hybridity. It is translating and transporting the modes of one culture into another, lifting bits of both and mixing. Sampling is not just one of the techniques of the digital, it has become a way of life.” (Stocker and Schlopf, 11) To relate to Gill’s metaphor of the sandwich in his infographic to describe trans/inter/multidisciplinary, I’m not making sandwiches or blending them in

a meat grinder, but rather creating a charcuterie board of food and nonfood where all ingredients can complement each other.

The way that I approach hybrid studio practice also relates to how Miwon Kwan speaks of site specificity in her essay *One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity*. She says,

“Today's site-oriented practices inherit the task of demarcating the relational specificity that can hold in tension the distant poles of spatial experiences... This means addressing the differences of adjacencies and distances between one thing, one person, one place, one thought, one fragment next to another, rather than invoking equivalencies via one thing after another.” (Kwon 16)

Kwan's stances are direct in challenging power dynamics of society and place. I use participation to build equity in the arts between everyone involved in the project. It is important to me that voices are heard, participants have a sense of ownership, and the connectivity and relationality of my projects give the opportunity to lead to change.

My case studies show that the different aspects of my practice are not siloed nor does one happen after the other. My research in “We Belong” informed “Expressions in ASL” but as they have developed simultaneously “Expressions in ASL” has returned the favor and informed “We Belong.” It is one fluid practice with projects next to one another that interact, inform, and relate to each other rather than a practice of projects that happen one after another.

11. Conclusion

This thesis support paper discussed exploration into my artistic practice, which I label as a hybrid studio practice. I embrace a fluid approach that draws from various disciplines, fields, techniques, and traditions. My practice sits at the intersection of fine art and design, with each informing the other without hierarchy. This process is open-where participation, materiality, language, knowledge exchange, and audience engagement play significant roles in shaping the artwork. In terms of participation, I emphasize its importance as the core of my projects, involving various communities or groups in my artmaking process. I draw from theories by scholars such as Clair Bishop and Leisabeth Huybrechts, using a hybrid mindset that blends a participatory mindset with an expert-based approach to create art objects that represent participants' experiences. Regarding materiality, my process highlights the significance of materials in conveying conceptual and aesthetic elements in their artworks. I explore various materials and techniques, seeking a direct correlation between the medium, the concept, and the environment where the work will be displayed. Language also plays a crucial role in my practice, serving as a tool for expression and connectivity.

“We Belong” is a public art project that involves translating American Sign Language messages from students into a permanent artwork. I explore the iconicity and modality of ASL, aiming to represent the language's expressive qualities in the artwork. Materiality plays a crucial role in visualizing ASL, where I experiment with light to capture movement and expressiveness. Participation is integral to the project, with students invited to create messages for future students as a form of stewardship. The

resulting artwork serves as a living legacy, empowering future generations of students and fostering a sense of belonging within the school community.

In “Expressions in ASL” I collaborate with a Deaf ASL user, Shannon Anderson, to create artworks that express her lived experience through ASL. Through one-on-one participation sessions, Anderson expresses her experiences and emotions as a Deaf person living in a Hearing world. I captured these signs through photography and video, then created sculptures aiming to embody the movement and expressive qualities of her language.

Language becomes a key consideration, where I utilize my own experience with deafness to bridge between Deaf and Hearing individuals. I grapple with how to translate the deeper meanings of Anderson’s signs into visual art. The artworks aim to be legible to ASL users, although the abstraction involved in translating signs poses challenges to their readability.

Materiality plays a crucial role in bridging participation and language, with each sculpture fabricated from different materials to evoke the essence of the ASL signs. The artwork aims to embody the signs in four dimensions, capturing their movement and temporal dimension. Videos are used alongside sculptures to enhance the representation of directional flow in the signs' movements, complementing the visual aspects of the artworks.

These case studies illustrate how a hybrid studio practice integrates knowledge from various disciplines and traditions, informing a more expansive approach to art creation. The projects demonstrate a non-linear and non-hierarchical manifestation of practice, where different aspects inform and interact with each other simultaneously. Additionally, the notion of "one thing next to another" from Miwon Kwon's concept of site

specificity emphasizes the relational nature of practice, where projects interact, inform, and relate to each other fluidly. Ultimately, these case studies highlight the fluidity and interconnectedness of hybrid studio practice, where projects develop in tandem, influencing and enriching each other throughout the process.

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14. Glossary

Arduino: Arduino is an open-source platform used for building electronics projects.

Arduino consists of both a physical programmable circuit board (often referred to as a microcontroller) and a piece of software, or IDE (Integrated Development Environment) that runs on your computer, used to write and upload computer code to the physical board.” (What is an Arduino? - SparkFun Learn)

Communal Meaning: The creative work facilitates collective meaning that transcends individual perspective and experience. (Borstal and Korza, 10)

De’VIA: or Deaf View Image Art is art that examines and expresses the Deaf Experience from a cultural, linguistic, and intersectional point of view.

The 4 Elements of De’VIA:

De Deaf & Deaf-Blind Expression of Affirmation, Resistance, and Liberation

V View of how Deaf & Deaf-Blind experience the world

I Images/Motifs/Symbols of the Deaf Experience

A Art, Activism, Aesthetics, and Authentic Expressions of the Deaf Experience

([DE'VIA | MDHAC \(museumofdeaf.org\)](http://DE'VIA | MDHAC (museumofdeaf.org)))

Expert Mindset: Makers who are engaged in the expert mindset use their knowledge to generate surprising situations with the intent to defamiliarize with the purpose of connecting people or challenging societal structures. (Huybrechts)

Hybrid Mindset: A hybrid of participatory and Expert mindsets

Hybrid Studio Practice: A studio art practice that can draw from, pivot between, crossover, and sit between multiple fields, disciplines, traditions, and approaches.

Iconicity: How the form of language resembles its meaning (Leigh, 76)

Modality: How a language is expressed. (Leigh, 76)

Paper Tole: also known as 3D Decoupage is a craft where identical prints of the same picture are individually cut out, shaped and built one on top of each other, using silicone glue as a spacer, to form a delightful, three-dimensional picture. (<http://papertole.co.uk>)

Participatory Mindset: makers who are engaged in the participatory mindset are mainly focused on creating constructive participation with and between participants while learning from these interactions (Huybrechts)

Photosterosynthesis: a lost imaging technology developed by the co-inventor of contemporary cinema, Louis Lumière. This imaging technology, released in 1920, produces dimensionally deep and multi-layered images through a series of stacked photographs. In this process, individual frames are shot at extremely small depths of field (wide aperture) at incrementally increasing focal lengths (focus pull), which has the effect of "depth-slicing" of a dimensional space with the help of focus. Each individual exposure is printed as a transparent positive on glass and stacked to produce a composite 3D photo with the scene "entombed" in a translucent image several centimeters thick. The resulting composite image is somewhat similar to a hologram but is a physically volumetric representation. (Hertz) <https://conceptlab.com/photostereosynthesis>

Temporal Space: A space relating to time.

Thing: Is what is produced in a project when considering the relationality of all its parts, artist, maker, participants, engagement, space, place, and relationality

15. Appendix

A) Veterans' Impact Project



Figure 44. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, and James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." 3 panels 3' x 16.25' x 6". Forton MG. 2014

Partner Artists: Andrea Orlosky and James Robertson

2014

Richmond, VA. Exhibited at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

3 Panels 3' x 16.25' x 6"

Forton MG

In what is believed to be America's first crowd-sourced veterans' monument, The Veterans' Impact Project honored over 170 veterans through a participatory process where community members and veterans operated a custom-built Roman Ballista to fire

symbols of military service into a 3000lb wall of clay. Those impressions were cast on-site to create this monument to all veterans.

The Process

We surveyed many groups of veterans to identify symbols of their military service then sought out to collect objects that represent these symbols. In order to make reusable projectiles that can be fired over and over from a ballista, we made castings of these objects. We had community days where we invited veterans to bring in their own personal objects to be cast into projectiles.



Figure 45. Firing the Ballista.



Figure 46. Infantry Unit pressing objects into clay.

During the event, we invited community members and veterans to honor themselves or a loved one by selecting an object to represent their service and launch it 100 ft into the air smashing into our 3000lb wall of clay. To represent larger objects that were not able to be launched from the ballista, we had “infantry divisions” get up close to the wall and smash it into the clay by hand. Over the course of two days, 170 veterans were honored representing all US conflicts dating back to WWI.

To cast the sculpture we cut the clay wall into three parts, built a mold around it, and cast it using Forton MG. The Veterans' Impact Project monument has been exhibited at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Virginia War Memorial.



Figure 48. Infantry Unit pressing objects into clay. Figure 47. Panel 2 Detail



Figure 49. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." Panel 1. Forton MG. 2014



Figure 50. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." Panel 2. Forton MG. 2014



Figure 51. Figure 46. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, James Robertson, "Veterans' Impact Project." Panel 3. Forton MG. 20

B) Impressions of Courage



Figure 52. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." Ink on Muslin. 7.6' x 733'. 2016

Partner Artists: Andrea Orlosky and Jake Urbanski

Richmond, Virginia

2016

Ink on muslin

7.5 x 733"

Impressions of Courage set a world record in printmaking while honoring people affected by cancer. 207 outfits were submitted each representing an individual who had or has cancer. The outfits were turned into collagraph plates. The plates were lined up

down a street, inked up by an army of printmakers, and printed onto one long piece of fabric.

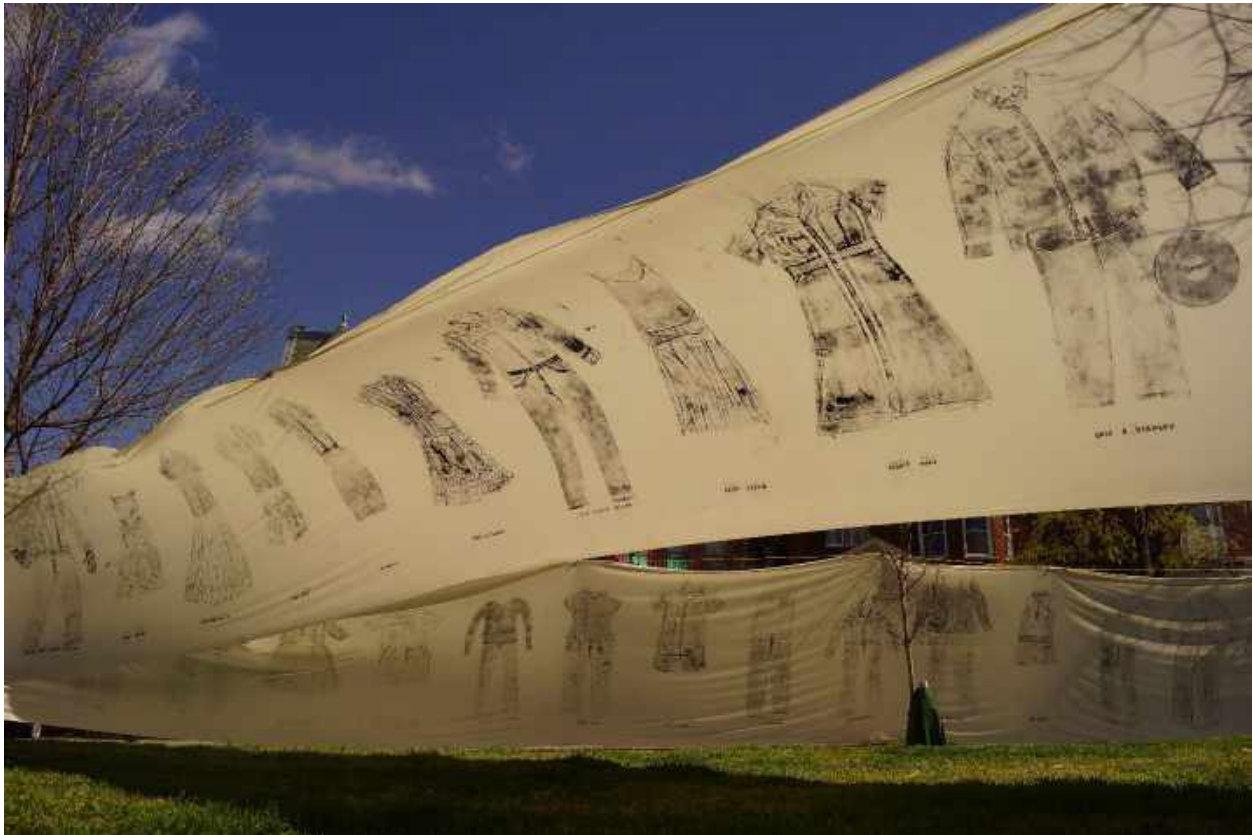


Figure 53. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." (Detail). Ink on Muslin. 2016



Figure 55. Inking the plates



Figure 54. Printing with steamroller



Figure 58. Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." (Detail). Ink on Muslin. 2016



Figure 56. . Kevin Orlosky, Andrea Orlosky, Jake Urbanski, "Impressions of Courage." (Detail). Ink on Muslin. 2016



Figure 57. Showing the print.

C) Laces of Lynn



Figure 59. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022

Partner Artist: Andrea Orlosky

Lynn, Massachusetts

2022

Painted Steel

9 x 12 x 12'

Laces of Lynn is an immersive, community activated public artwork which ties the history of shoemaking in Lynn to its values as a diverse and growing contemporary city.

Hopeful and inspiring, this colorful, iconic sculpture engaged with Lynn residents to submit one word they felt best described themselves. The submitted words were water jet cut into giant steel shoelaces that interweave and support each other to represent community strength and connection. The wavelike form of the sculpture references the presence of the ocean for this coastal location. The varied colors and languages celebrate the diversity of Lynn.

We conducted eleven public workshops in partnership with community organizations. Word submissions were also received online in conjunction with a social media campaign and through drop boxes located at local businesses. We created an educational slideshow about the project which was presented at four elementary schools and several community organizations. We received four-hundred-fifty-seven-word submissions, which was curated into two-hundred-fifty-one unique adjectives.

The variety of languages in the sculpture are related to the prevalence of speakers in the community as recorded by the Lynn Public Schools and local census data. Languages represented in the sculpture are English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Khmer, Vietnamese, and Arabic.



Figure 60. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022



Figure 61. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." (Detail). Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022



Figure 62. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022



Figure 63. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022



Figure 64. Kevin Orlosky and Andrea Orlosky, "Laces of Lynn." Painted Steel. 9' x 12' x 12'. Lynn, Massachusetts. 2022

D) Mycorrhizal



Figure 65. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimesions Variable. 2023

Revelstoke, British Columbia

2023

Steel, Light, chipboard, Arduino, soundscape

Dimensions variable

Mycorrhizal is an interactive light-based installation that uses community-drawn mycelium as a symbol to illustrate how we as people are all interconnected. Mycelium is the root structure of mushrooms. Not only does it break down and decompose organic matter, but it is also believed to have intelligence and acts as a vehicle for trees and plants to communicate throughout the forest. Specifically, mycorrhizae mycelium forms a

relationship with the roots of plants and will reinvest carbon into plants in tumultuous times. It will connect different species of plants and can communicate and transfer nutrients among them. There are many parallels to how individuals connect and grow within a healthy and thriving community.

I engaged students at Emily Carr University of Art and Design asking them to draw one line that represents themselves as a hyphae or “root” building up to make the overall collective mycelium structure. These drawings are illuminated and projected upon the ground. When the viewer enters the network, the light comes alive with movement of breath and heartbeat representing that within every community there exists a multitude of pathways for connection, but it requires effort from an individual to enact upon them.



Figure 66. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." (Detail). Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimensions Variable. 2023



Figure 67. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." (Detail). Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimensions Variable. 2023



Figure 68. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimensions Variable. 2023



Figure 69. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimensions Variable. 2023



Figure 70. Kevin Orlosky, "Mycorrhizal." Steel, Light, Arduino. Dimensions Variable. 2023

16. Reflection

When beginning my studies at Emily Carr I attempted to keep an open mindset to allow for new ideas and approaches in my artistic practice. My exploration within the program led me to create artwork I would never have imagined I would make. I have worked with many groups of people with disabilities in the past, but this was the first time I had worked with the Deaf communities. It has been an illuminating experience which has allowed me to better understand some of the lived experiences of Deaf people. I have developed a deep appreciation for ASL and have come to better understand the poetics and art of the language. ASL is fundamentally different from spoken language and studying it through form and light has been a transformational experience for me.

I began materials exploration by programming light through Arduino and using transparent materials which utilize light. When I was given the opportunity to work with the School for the Deaf, I was interested in using language as an engagement tool. I enjoyed the challenge of approaching language differently with ASL. My current exploration in light as an artistic medium is what led me to develop this photographic process to capture the movements of ASL.

From my experience with public art projects, I was concerned about the timeline of We Belong matching up with the completion of the MFA program. Because of this, I decided to use the process I developed for the public art commission and apply it to working with an individual to create gallery artworks. This change in approach led me to some unexpected results, and I don't think I would have considered creating the term Hybrid Studio Practice had I not completed this additional adaptation. Working with

Shannon Anderson helped me understand the Deaf experience and apply that understanding to the project with the school. The combination of working with a Deaf adult who integrates within a hearing world, and a school that creates a Deaf World community where hearing people are outsiders, gifted me with a newly holistic perspective. I was able to take what I learned working with Anderson into consideration when working with the school, and vice versa. I believe I was able to be more considerate, understanding, and empathetic in my approaches in artmaking with both the school and with Anderson. This way of working made both projects much stronger and I will likely continue to investigate these methodological adaptations in my work. Simultaneously creating a smaller project of similar approach with an individual in conversation with each large-scale public art commission, provides an opportunity to gain experiential knowledge that couldn't be fully realized if I worked solely on the commissioned project. This co-relation and communication between individual and group, public and private experiences in my artwork could emerge as the heart of my future Hybrid Studio Practice.